

# protodimension magazine



# VOLUME VII

## SEPTEMBER 2016

**Protodimension Magazine** is a mostly monthly publication written and produced by fans of the modern, conspiratorial, horror genre of role play gaming. This magazine is provided freely via online download, and intends to follow all rules regarding fair use of copyrighted and trademarked material. No revenue for the writers and publishers of this fan magazine is generated directly or indirectly.

*Chief Editor:* Lee Williams

*Art Direction:* Norm Fenlason

**Protodimension Magazine** is a Trademark of *Kinstaff Media, LLC*. All rights reserved. While **Protodimension Magazine** is a trademark of *Kinstaff Media LLC*, all copyrights are held by the respective authors and artists, unless otherwise indicated.

Cover by Todd Shearer. Copyright 2016, Todd Shearer. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

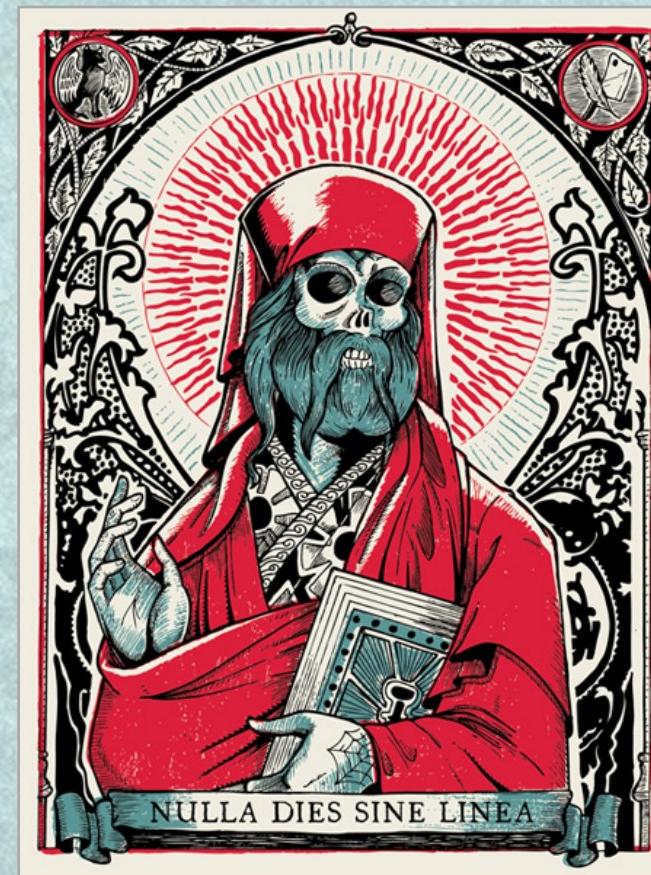
Some artwork by Cesar Valtierra. Copyright 2016. Cesar Valtierra. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Other images used without permission.

As a fan-based publication, **Protodimension Magazine** is always looking for contributions by the fan community. Please see the **Protodimension Magazine** website at <http://www.protodimension.com/zine>. Submissions can be sent via email to [submissions@protodimension.com](mailto:submissions@protodimension.com)

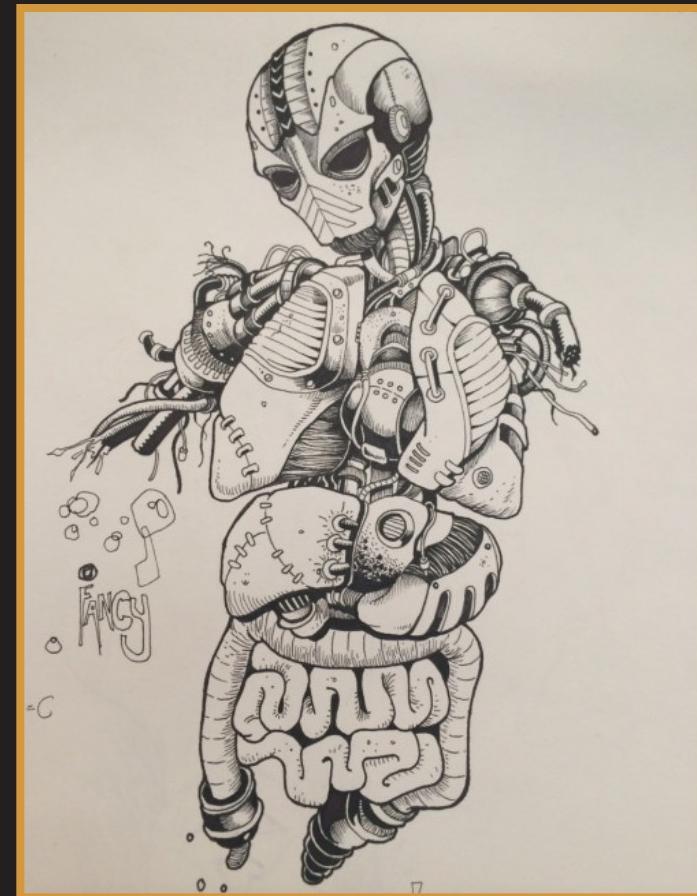
The *Dark Conspiracy®* game in all forms is owned by *Far Future Enterprises*. Copyright © 1991, 1997 *Far Future Enterprises*. *Dark Conspiracy®* is a registered trademark of *Far Future Enterprises*. Far Future permits web sites and fanzines for this game, provided it contains this notice, that Far Future is notified, and subject to a withdrawal of permission on 90 days notice. The contents of this site are for personal, non-commercial use only. Any use of *Far Future Enterprises*' copyrighted material or trademarks anywhere on this web site and its files should not be viewed as a challenge to those copyrights or trademarks. In addition, any program/articles/file on this site cannot be republished or distributed without the consent of the author who contributed it.

*Conspiracy Rules* is copyright © 2012, *Kinstaff Media LLC* and is used with their permission.



# CONTENTS

- 4 **Hunting Ground**  
*An Unnatural Excursion*  
By Shae Davidson  
For FU, the Freeform Universal RPG
- 7 **THE SHOP**  
*Player's resource*  
By Paul Riegel-Green  
For Dark Conspiracy, 1st Ed.
- 9 **Canvas of Fate**  
*Fiction*  
By Roger Huntman  
For your enjoyment
- 15 **Up In Smoke**  
*Some Small Luxuries*  
By Paul Riegel-Green  
For Dark Conspiracy 1st Ed.
- 18 **Review: 100 Oddities  
for a Graveyard**  
*A product review*  
Review by Eric Fabbiaschi  
For Weird Sources
- 20 **Corporate Security**  
*How it's done in the Greater  
Depression*  
By Paul Riegel-Green  
For Dark Conspiracy 1st Ed.
- 26 **The Terrible House**  
*Fiction*  
By Andrew Gardner-Blatch  
Read on, McDuff.
- 29 **Protodimension Interviews  
Toren Atkinson**  
*An interview*  
By Lee Williams  
For personnel insight
- 31 **The Idol**  
*Fiction*  
By Anthony Lee-Dudley  
More edgy reading pleasure
- 34 **The Proctor, Gamble, Johnson,  
& Johnson (PG&J) Tower**  
*A location*  
By Paul Riegel-Green  
For Dark Conspiracy 1st Ed.
- 36 **The Scribe's Study**  
*A Demon Seed*  
By Lee Williams  
For Dark Conspiracy/Conspiracy  
Rules



# HUNTING GROUND

An *Unnatural Excursion*

By Shae Davidson

FOR FU, THE FREEFORM UNIVERSAL  
RPG

## THE TOWN

Pine Grove (population 5500, incorporated 1852) is a small town in north central West Virginia or southwestern Pennsylvania. The county seat of Moebius County, the town sits on rolling hills with a river running along the eastern and northern edges; steep forested hills dominate the surrounding area. Small businesses line Main Street and the Four Winds Bar, the town's only tavern, occupies an abandoned theater. Visitors flock to Pine Grove for the annual Riding Mower Festival (second weekend in May) and Tall Tale Days (second weekend in September). The county historical society has an archive and exhibit space above the old dime store and on special occasions has been known to display the strange warm stone Colonel Bradley found when he built his cabin in 1792. Lessard College, a small private liberal arts school, attracts students from around the region. According to local lore the doors in the college's chapel don't always open into the same rooms and books in the library sometimes contain unsettling messages for unsuspecting readers.

Several smaller towns spring up along the two-lane highways leading out of Pine Grove. Lawrence Run lies about four miles to the west along Route 17. Saint Alfonzo's Methodist Church overlooks the post office and two dozen houses from a rounded hill, and a gravel quarry sits hidden about a half mile north of the town. Visitors to the small cemetery nestled behind the church have noted that stars seem to be different colors when viewed from the site. One mile farther west travelers will find Stubbs Mountain, a tor rising above the surrounding hills. Narrow trails wind up and down the summit, created by generations of wandering hunters and a logging company that briefly operated in the area in the 1940s.

Traveling about two miles south from Pine Grove along Route 22, visitors will find Trenton

and the county's only high school, home to the state champion backgammon team (1990-1992, 2008). Houses and odd businesses pop up along the roads leading to Lawrence Run and Trenton. Farther to the south the hills become rougher and houses fewer and farther between. Small logging and mining towns dot the southernmost part of the county, although their operations ended many years ago. Some residents of these towns don't like going out after dark, and avoid damaging the dandelions that grow in their yards.

## A SMALL MYSTERY

The Lyman Cutright Memorial Library has been a beloved fixture of the community since it opened in 1922. Nestled in the residential neighborhoods between Main Street and the campus of Lessard College the library attracts a respectable number of visitors each week. Even after the new county library opened in Trenton in the late 1970s people - especially residents of Pine Grove itself - continue to darken the doors of the Cutright Library.

The library is small and cozy. Ivy grows up one side of the brick building, and two small statues of griffins flank the short flight of stairs leading to the main entrance. Beautiful wooden trim accents the rooms inside, and the ticking of the old Regulator clock hanging above the main desk echoes throughout the building. Two large rooms of open stacks and study tables fill most of the first floor. Small reading lamps grace the tables of the second-floor reference room, making the space feel somehow both solemn and comforting. Directly opposite the main desk, next to the old card catalogs that the librarian has never had the heart to remove, a door leads to a small parlor where more modestly-sized community groups meet and where teens lounge on sofas reading science fiction novels on long summer afternoons.

The Pine Grove Science Fiction and Mystery Society gathers in this parlor every fortnight. The

# PROTODIMENSION MAGAZINE

## HUNTING GROUND

group is small—made up of only the PCs—but the librarian, Ms. Gum, gives the group the same welcome as larger gatherings. Tea and cookies await their arrival, and the morning of each meeting she carefully arranges the letters on the signboard in front of the library to announce the event.

This week, though, Ms. Gum hovers nervously just outside of the parlor as the book club gets settled for the evening. Before they begin their discussion she asks if any of them have noticed anything odd about the library or if anyone has had anything stolen during a visit. Someone, she explains, has been rifling through her desk and vandalizing the library after hours. Some small inconsequential items have been stolen, a glass goose and reading lamp have been broken, and things have been moved around in the building at night.

Ms. Gum feels close the small reading club, and believes that their taste in literature might offer a way to tackle the problem. As she discusses the weird events with the characters, the party will notice that she is trying to muster the courage needed to tell them something. Once the librarian feels that the group is interested in helping, she retrieves a laptop and a small box from her desk. The box contains small shards that look like fragments of twisted grey glass. They pieces did not come from the goose or lamp, and turned up in a corner of the reference room one morning. As they examine the pieces Ms. Gum pulls up a video on her computer. She borrowed motion-triggered cameras from a friend and installed them in the library one night. The video shows a stapler making a few short jerking motions to the edge of a counter. When it falls to the floor, the remaining papers and a pencil holder launch themselves in a chaotic burst. No cause is visible.

The old clock ticks loudly as Ms. Gum lets the party examines the shards and reviews the video. Would the characters, Gum asks, be willing to help? More specifically, would the group be willing

to camp out in the library one night to see if they can find the cause of the odd events?

### PLAYFUL VISITORS

About an hour after the characters have started their vigil a strange chill passes through the library and the normally welcoming building suddenly feels oddly empty and quiet. Have each player roll a die. On a four or five, the character realizes that the clock mounted behind the circulation desk has stopped ticking. On a six, the sudden silence overwhelms the PC, causing her to feel anxious and disoriented for the next five minutes. Any timepieces the PCs have also seem to have stopped. Phones show flashing zeros for the time (and can't get a signal), while the hands of dial watches appear frozen. Anyone near the small reading room where the Science Fiction and Mystery club meets will notice that the street lights have gone out and a strange glow seems to rise from the direction of Main Street. Glancing out the windows in the back of the library will reveal a rusty old truck parked in the shadows.

As soon as the eerie silence falls on the building the PCs sense movement and a faint presence. Shadows seem to flicker in their peripheral vision, and something runs up the stairs leading to the large reference room. Faint skittering sounds come from the stacks on the first floor, and a stapler falls from the circulation desk.

Strange faint shapes dart between shelves as the characters explore the empty library. It is difficult to get a clear view at first, but the forms cling low to the floor as they run, and leap off tables or chairs as PCs enter rooms. Eventually the investigators get a clear view of one of the creatures. It seems to be a cat made of a writhing mass of smoke.

Many of the cats play in the small library, but others seem to be intent on searching the building. These scour the desks and table for pencils, which they nibble until the tip is pointless, while others

rummage behind Mrs. Gum's desk to find tea. Tea affects the smoke cats in much the same way that catnip affects other cats, and the lucky cat who finds the small supply the librarian keeps at her desk will roll on the desktop, scattering papers in its ecstasy.

### THE POACHER

The cats themselves are silent, although the characters will hear the clatter of things being knocked to the floor as the weird creatures play in the library. A little after midnight, though, a loud crash echoes through the library. Any cats nearby freeze at the sudden noise before flattening their bodies to the floor and slinking behind shelves.

The sound came from the second floor of the library (or one of the large first-floor reading rooms if the PCs are on the second floor near midnight). Surveying the scene, the characters find a strange figure wearing an old green wood overcoat crouched with his back to them. A heavy metal flashlight lies to his left and fragments of a ceramic teapot (a high school art project that had been on display) are strewn across the floor. The figure lifts a rusty claw hammer and smashes something on the floor before him as the characters watch. As the blow lands grey shards similar to the ones found by Mrs. Gum scatter.

He brings the hammer down a third time, but pauses as he raises it for another blow. Arm lifted his head tilts slowly from side to side before he suddenly turns to face the PCs. A filthy stocking mask covers his head, obscuring and twisting his features in a sickening way. As he rises to face the characters they can see what looks like a shattered grey glass cat and a lumpy burlap sack on the floor.

The Poacher haunts Pine Grove at night, hunting the smoke cats for some unholy purpose known only to his masters. The light from his flashlight makes them solid, allowing his to smash them to bits before the effect fades. The beam has no

effect on humans unless it strikes their eyes, in which case the character must roll to avoid becoming dizzy and disoriented. The flashlight only works for the poacher. If another person tries to use the device the light will flicker a few times and then fade.

The menacing figure studies the characters for a moment, jerking his head from side to side as he observes the group. He eventually locks eyes with one of them and maintains the gaze as he slowly crouches to retrieve his flashlight. Light in hand, he springs forward in an effort to scare away the characters.

The smoke cats hide as the Poacher tries to drive away the PCs. None can be found when he returns to his task, and in a fit of anger he begins pursuing the characters. He is cunning and physically powerful. Facing him directly would be a punishing experience for any character. Anyone attacking him directly suffers a penalty during the action—rolling two dice and keeping the lower score—and even characters who are physically fit or have combat experience roll only one die during the conflict.

### PINE GROVE AT NIGHT

If the characters flee the library they find the world outside changed as well. If the characters leave through the main door they will find that the two griffin statues are missing. The rest of the town stands empty. Occasionally lights flash on in houses lining the streets near the library, but the homes themselves are empty. As they explore the town the characters will occasionally find strange scarecrows leaning against lampposts or the sides of houses; on a roll of 1-2 the scarecrows disappear or change position when the characters aren't looking. The stars in the sky are different. Lustrous points of blue, green, and purple gleam from the sky, and familiar constellations have vanished.

The odd glow emanating from Main Street comes from a carnival stretching the length of the street. Rides twirl and spin in the night air, lights flash from game booths, and strange calliope music swells from the haunted house but no one is in sight. A little experimentation (or a mechanical background) will give the characters a basic sense of how to operate the rides, although rides they've stopped will restart a few moments after their backs are turned.

The characters will also catch glimpses of smoke cats in the vacant town. They lounge in doorways and chase one another across the empty streets. Anyone rolling a five or six (with a bonus die for a trait related to perception) will spot a couple of the ghostly cats silhouetted against the moon. If the Poacher is following the party or is nearby the cats become skittish, hiding in doorways and running for cover when anyone approaches, and even the cats in the sky fly higher to avoid his presence.

The cats appear more often as the group moves north (in the direction of Main Street). Efforts to track them leads to a small park commemorating the founding of Pine Grove. The cats live in a large sycamore tree there, its broad branches drooping almost to the ground. At night the trunk opens and the cats emerge, with many clustering on the branches or romping around the playground equipment at the other end of the park. Cats beneath the branches of the tree are completely invisible to the Poacher and are immune to the effects of his light.

### DEFATING THE POACHER

The characters cannot kill the poacher using conventional weapons. He can be battered down but he always rises, brushes the dust off his filthy coat, and soldiers on. They do have a few options, and the GM can create others that fit the tone of the story.

The strange light he carries can affect him. If the light strikes his eyes he will freeze in place and his

flesh will turn into a murky substance resembling damp plaster. PCs can use mirrors to turn the beam on the Poacher.

The cats can defeat him if he is under the boughs of the sycamore tree in the park. The characters will have to help ensure that he stays under the tree as the cats swarm him, but if enough cats attack at the park their smoky bodies blend together to create a writhing cloud, leaving only a tattered overcoat when they resume their individual forms.

The characters can also try to trap him on one of the carnival rides. This is only a stopgap solution. After a period of time—days, weeks, or even years—he will escape and take terrible vengeance on the strange cats who roam Pine Grove at night and the characters who imprisoned him.

### HOME COMING

The uncanny night version of Pine Grove seems somehow freer and more open after the Poacher is defeated. Cats roam the streets more openly, with some even brushing against characters as they explore the town and following them as they make their way down the street. The cats are safe, but the characters remain trapped.

The world shifted when the clock in the library fell silent. The characters will return to the library a few minutes before dawn if they restart the clock. Any damage caused during their adventure (such as the broken teapot) remains. The cats will continue to visit the library after the adventurers return.

The group may choose to remain the alternate version of Pine Grove for a time, exploring the town and its environs. The otherworldly night version of Pine Grove is a blank canvass. The characters can return and try to find the missing griffin statues, or explore the connection between the place's eerie skyscape and the cemetery in Lawrence Run.



# THE SHOP

Player's resource

By Paul Riegel-Green

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY, 1ST ED.

**Editor's Note:** this is a preview of the full-length work "Gear Up" by Paul Riegel-Green, who has kindly offered it to us as a taster for the long version. Paul is a published RPG author and a former Demonground contributor "back in the day". Thank you for everything!

**T**HE SHOP, THAT'S what everyone who talks about it calls it, is located just outside of Dreamland. It's located there so that those who live and work in Dreamland can sneak out and grab some item that might not be available without being traced.

This non-descript entrance is on a quiet side street in a brick warehouse that looks like any other. If you didn't know it was there you would drive right by.

It has a simple metal plaque next to the door on the side of a brick Warehouse. It simply states "Acme Import – Export". The door is glass and silvered metal and has a tattered Open / Closed sign that hangs in the window.

However, from the moment you touch the knob on the front door, you realize that you are entering the shady world where anything can be bought, as the knob is covered with a rough surface to resist the leaving with fingerprints.

Inside there are two men, one behind a counter and the other on a stool just inside the door. They are both dressed in dark suits, plain black ties, and are clean-shaven without any distinctive characteristics or markings. They are both acutely focused on you as you enter the shop.

No matter how many times you come here you never seen any other customers. The man behind the counter always speaks in a hushed monotone voice to welcome you and find out why you have come to his "humble shop". The man near the door never says a word.

The man near the door stands as you enter the shop, not in an intimidating fashion but more like out of reflex. He then follows you around the shop with a small white rag in one hand, it's then you notice that both men are wearing white cotton gloves. As you proceed around the store, every surface that you touch is immediately wiped clean of fingerprints.

The storefront itself is small and full of glass display cases housing hundreds of items and on the back counter is a catalog containing any

non- weapon, non-vehicular device an character might need.

Despite the small size of the storefront if an item is in their catalog or on display the man behind the counter will disappear into the back room and produce the item requested.

Several times upon leaving you notice that the open/closed sign is flipped back to the open side and you can hear the tiny whir of a motor as the video camera high above the door tracks your movements out of sight.



# PROTODIMENSION MAGAZINE

### ARMOR

Some armor value numbers will appear as two numbers separated by a slash (/). The number to the left is the armor versus melee weapons (the number of points reduced not the number of dice) the number on the right is versus firearms. Sometimes the number on the right is surrounded by parenthesis () this represents the number of points of lethal damage absorbed by the armor.



### LIGHT BODY ARMOR

**Ballistic Coveralls, Ramtech CO-1:** This is a full body coverall made of a lightweight ballistic cloth that gives the wearer full body protection from stabs and small caliber firearms. Weight 4 Kg. Price \$150. Availability (S/C) Special Armor (3)

**Ballistic Jacket, Big Ben 1070:** This is a jacket, made of a lightweight ballistic cloth, that gives the wearer upper body protection from stabs and small caliber firearms. Weight 2 Kg. Price \$100. Availability (S/C) Special Armor (3)

**Ballistic Shirt, Big Ben T201:** This is a T-Shirt, made of a lightweight ballistic cloth that gives the wearer protection that covers the majority of the upper body from stabs and small caliber firearms. Weight 1 Kg. Price \$75. Availability (S/C) Special Armor (3)

**Leather Armor:** This is a lightweight custom made armored breastplate made of a thick leather. This affords some protection from melee attacks and small caliber rounds. Weight 8 Kg Price \$350 Availability (R/R) Special Armor 4/1

**Light Undercover, Ramtech Lt 2000:** This vest is designed to be as protective as possible while being totally concealable. Weight 1 Kg Price \$100 Availability (S/S) Special Armor 1

**Pull-Up Pouch Vest, Big Ben V111:** This is a lightweight ballistic vest that covers most of the torso, but can be stored in something as small

as a fanny pack when not worn. Weight 1 Kg Price \$125 Availability (S/S) Special Armor 1

**Stab Vest, Security Industries V-17:** This is a small concealable vest designed primarily to protect the wearer from stab wounds. It is used extensively by corrections officers. Weight 1 Kg. Price \$75. Availability (S/S) Special Armor 3/-

**Undercover Vest, Miltech Ltd.:** This vest is a heavier version of the Light Undercover that gives better coverage but also is more noticeable. Weight 1 Kg. Price \$200. Availability (S/S) Special Armor 2/1



# CANVAS OF FATE

Fiction

By Roger Huntman

FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT

## 1977 FALCON LAKE

The boat is a fairly small one but big enough to do the job of diving in a lake. Delbert brushes back his long brown hair as he walks up to the boat. He approaches with a smile as he looks at the Hispanic man clad in a denim jacket, watch cap and black man with a headband. The radio is cranked up and Ram Jam plays *Black Betty*. He is a bit surprised when he sees a small boy of about 8 or 9 years old. Both of the men are hard at work but this doesn't stop them from grooving to the music and taking an occasion swig off of a couple of cans of *Hamm's* beer. Delbert looks at the large cooler and hopes, it won't get in the way of the dive.

The boy's features matched those of his black father down to a tee. Delbert's voice doesn't carry over the radio. Neither of the impromptu crew are aware of Delbert until he drops his easel and back pack into the boat and point a finger gun at each of them.

Don Bane startles easily and reaches quickly for a K bar knife at his belt. Jose on the other hand just jumps and spins dropping his can of beer. The young boy smiles broadly but seemed not to be surprised as he nabs the skittering can and holds it back up to its owner. He continues pushing and stacking the bags and boxes of equipment. Delbert sees that Don has already passed on some of his Navy skills to his son, but he dreads what Karl will say when he sees a kid on the boat. Before he can speak he hears Karl's cowboy boots on the wood planks of the dock.

Walking down the dock, is a man with a cowboy hat, leather jacket, and bell bottoms that nearly hide nearly all of his cowboy boots. There is a faded navy duffle over one well defined shoulder. There is no doubt that the man is hiding his bloodshot eyes with the large aviator style sunglasses.

"What the hell is this darkie music, shit? We ain't playing that horseshit the whole time" Karl says as

he throws his duffle onto a seat spilling out brand new dicing equipment.

"Ram Jam are white Honkie mutha fucka's like you" Don says, squaring up to the cowboy. Dropping down onto the boat's deck, they are nearly nose to nose before Karl gives in and both former navy men give each other a hug that starts out friendly but ends up with each man lifting the other off his feet, in turn, for a brief second or two. Delbert eyes both men and their still fresh out of the navy, physique.

His jealousy is a deep river. They all joined the Navy together in their senior year in Norfolk Nebraska. Jose, Don and Karl got in alright but Delbert was turned away because of a mitro-valve prolapse in his heart. That tiny hole in his heart kept him from Vietnam and being with his friends. He guessed it was for the best because even though they had gone in together only Jose and Don had served together. Karl had gone the way of the old frogman movies and got into B.U.D.s. Basic Underwater Demolition was not for the faint of heart.

Delbert had heard that the training was severe but Karl had no problem coming home and teaching Don how to dive as well. It was then that Karl had married Don's sister. It wasn't the time and place for a white guy to marry a girl of color especially in a small town like Norfolk. Karl seemed to be the luckiest man alive. Quarterback on the football team and finding a girl he loved as well.

Looking over, he saw Jose as smiling a forlorn smile as well. Neither he nor Jose was going to have that sort of bond that Karl and Don have. Jose had punched his Vietnam ticket as well but he never talked about it. One day, Delbert had caught a lift over to Jose's house and found the man sleeping in a hammock in the yard. Before he could get within five feet of the half Hispanic man, his plump wife Laura was out in the yard and warned Delbert not to wake him abruptly.

All his childhood friends had changed in the military, and changed in the war. It never fails to surprise Delbert when they choose to still include him. He was the neighborhood poor kid. He still wondered why Karl the quarterback would include him in his inner circle of friends. Then again why Karl's inner circle of friends are a Half Hispanic, the town's only black boy and the poor kid, Delbert never understood either. Karl defies convention.

When they went off to the Navy, Delbert hitch-hiked across the country. He painted murals, on the sides of vans and even some houses now and then. Last summer he was out here on a road trip with a on and off again woman named Milly. They had rode his motorcycle out here and Delbert and sketched a few nudes of her in a row boat, then he has smoked some grass while she drank a few beers, and had sex on the beach. While they were in the row boat, he had discovered that Falcon Lake was once a town. The Lake was created by the nearby dam. Delbert could see the tops of some of the buildings under the water.

Heading to the nearby town of Guerrero Viejo, Delbert remembers asking all sorts of questions. Most of it was about the churches that survived. As he asked more questions a darker side came out. Farther down in elevation was rumored a church that was on the lower elevation and outskirts of town. The church that had sunken farther down, was now, deeper in the lake. The church was started by some person that made a lot of money off railroad contracts or some other. When he dropped Milly at home to take care of her kid, Delbert returned to find out about the rich minister and his weird cult.

Almost everything he could find was building permits and artist recollection of the strange items the Gunther Hirsch had them make. The cost of all these items was tremendous and many of the items were made of gold. After more digging it was discovered that Mr. Hirsch and his followers had

never seen after his church had been flooded when the dam was built in the 50s. This had sent Delbert on a quest of information for the golden or any sign of Mr. Hirsch. After finding nothing he had laid all the facts out for his friends one night in a back yard get together.

"I don't know what my sister sees in your white ass". Don chided

"Probably the fact he's the only one in town with a job" Jose piped up.

"Ooh the sphinx speaks" Delbert let his presence be known as he set up his easel.

"Alright professor, you wanna paint us a picture of where this church is before you start splattering that canvas with paint" Karl says as he ambles over. Because I Don't like lying to my wife and telling her I'm off fishing with my buddies".

"You lied to my sister. Shit, boy I wouldn't wanna be you when you get home"

"If we find what I think, she won't be mad for very long. The thing to remember is that I haven't found any evidence that anyone who was involved with the cult was seen after the town was flooded". Delbert began as he set up a frame and started to drape it with muslin canvas. Seeing that they were all unconvinced Del reaches into his backpack and produces hand sketches, Delbert has made from stories and accounts of the few city records. "Right here X marks the spot".

Leaning around Jose studies the map and then turned to look at the land marks. Spotting an old Catholic church that the waters have not completely claimed, Jose begins to measure in his mind but raises his hands to guide him. The other three men fall silent. Even when they were kids Jose had an uncanny sense of direction. More than once they had gotten lost in the nearby woods with only Jose to guide them out. Once Jose's hands dropped they all seemed to exhale the breath that they did not know they were holding.

"Well, you got it chief"?

"For the last time Karl, I'm part Mexican NOT Indian pendejo"

"Yeah, yeah Navajo, I got it" Karl says holding his arms up to receive the three boxer's punches that Jose slams into his friend's arm.

"Fucking Gringo, cast off dammit". Jose said getting back to the wheel and starting the boat up. As David Soul sang *Don't Give Up On Us*.

Jose reaches for the radio knob but he hesitates uncertain whether to turn it down or up. The silence of Falcon Lake seems heavy and oppressive even in the sunlight. As the motor begins to join the radio Jose chooses that a chorus of sound is better than the lone sound of a boat engine. It's a short ride to the spot they are heading to. They stop and circle the spot a couple of times before tossing the anchor. Turning down Kansas as they sing *Carry On Wayward Son*, notices that Don's son has just been taking in this whole ritual with rapt amusement.

"What's his name" Delbert asks as he opens his case of chalks pencils and paints.

"What" Don asks turning his head and pivoting his body so his good ear can hear what Delbert is saying. It's another change in his friend, Don Bane that had never been there when they were boys growing up. More and more Delbert wishes it was back to the way it used to be.

"Him" Delbert says pointing.

Looking around Don seems mystified for a second then catches Delbert's meaning.

"That's my boy Porter, you met him three years ago when I took you with to Lake Michigan on that dive" Don says.

"Oh, on the book cover I painted of the lake, yeah, I remember, Jeez you've grown bud"

"Thanks, sir" Porter greeted.

"Hey you'll never guess who I met in Fremont Nebraska the other day" Don says above the radio.

"Who" Jose asks?

"Nurse Wettingham, you know the one from Saigon"

"Holy shit the naughty nurse. What is she doing?" Jose says as his eyes glaze over with shameful memories.

"She married that military consultant scientist Dr. Ziegler"

"That old fart" Jose says with a pained look.

"No shit, that creepy guy had his hands is so many crooked experiments" Karl added.

"How do you know that white man?" Don chides

"Where do you think all the G.I.s got the spiked LSD in Nam? Still, better not take your kids to his doctor's office."

"Hey, Del you got a girl with a kid that lives in Fremont. She take him to doctor Demento"?

"Milly? I dunno where she takes Roger. That kid is always sick and skinny. Have to warn her about Ziegler, is it?"

"Yeah, you do that. I ain't letting that guy treat my boy Porter, or my wife".

"She married Ziegler" Jose repeats incredulously"?

"Girl's gotta' eat" Karl says with an apologetic smile as he opens a sea locker with Don Bane diving stenciled on it. He runs his hand over the stenciling in its militariness. "Hey Delbert How about I pay you to paint a mural on this thing".

"You are not painting my dive locker" Don says first pointing his finger at Karl and then Delbert"

"Would I do that?" Delbert says with hands raised in surrender.

"I remember a certain car..." Jose adds as he cracks open another cold beer.

"The bomb was groovy, and so was that painting".

"That's funny our moms didn't think a nude blonde on the hood was too groovy. Jose says opening the sea locker.

"Holy shit, you gonna dive in that fuckin relic?" Karl exclaims as both he and Jose stand looking in the large sea chest.

Inside Don's sea chest sits an old C.E. Heinke dive helmet that was last cutting edge diving gear in the World War 2 helmet. Picking up the large globular helmet Karl opens the circular window.

"Hey, I can't let you dive in this antique!"

"Hey that's my antique" Don Bane counters.

"Tell ya what, you take my rig. It's a top of the line Kirby Morgan dive helmet.

"What the hell are you gonna use?"

"I'll use the antique." Karl says with a smile.

"I can't do that"

"Hey if this rig doesn't work, I can swim back up a hell of a lot faster than you" Karl says laying his hand on Don's shoulder.

"That remains to be seen."

"If we find any relics both you guys can buy next year's new gear"

As *Take it to the limit* by the Eagles comes on all four of the boat crew are busy getting the two divers suited up and the machines working to furnish air to back of the C.E. Heinke suit. It doesn't take long before both Don and Karl are over the side. There is a long moment when Don is uncertain of the brand new dive gear and he asks to change into his own suit but Karl insists and refuses to relinquish the helmet, then he rubs Porter's head for good luck as the boy turns on the air pump.

"Love you son. I'll be right back O.K.? Make sure uncle Karl has fresh air okay.

"Sure dad".

When both men are over the side Jose lowers a thick rope with a dive basket on it. Turning, he sees the determined look on Porters face. Both men and the Boy watch over the side as the water hides first the men and then the basket. Delbert is seized by a sudden attack of dread so powerful he wants to call it off and haul Karl up by the air hose. Stepping

back from the boat's edge he turns and looks at Jose's face. Jose stands there gauging Delbert's face as well. Aerosmith urges them to *Dream On* through the radio.

"Looks like all we can do it wait".

## DOWN BELOW

Don can feel the oppressiveness of the dark emerald water. The water is almost too cold to dive in. He wonders how cold it will be when they get to the lower elevations. He is glad for the dive lights that Karl brought. Karl assisted the county and the local police department with search and rescue diving but Don knows that Karl uses that as a way to deflect attention from moving lots of grass and other drugs. The new diving equipment was probably from profits from one of those deals. For a crook, Karl has no problems sharing the wealth with friends and family.

As Karl drops like a stone through the water Don knows right where the meteor called Karl strikes the lake floor because he kicks up a cloudy storm of sediment. The forest of seaweed grows up all over, furthering the green tint to everything, except the church. The white marble church shines through the green haze of water like a lighthouse beacon when Don points the dive light at it.

Like two boys at the pool, they look at each other simultaneously. Karl gives the thumbs up first, as he starts his plod toward the Marble structure. Don is not able to protest that they should be careful of the old structure. This is always how it has been. Karl was the good looking one, the athletic one, and the one born to a higher middle class family. The man would kid each of them about their ethnicity, even Delbert who he had call Irish mutt a time or two, but he had one of those positive personalities that people couldn't stay mad at.

Even in a heavy diving suit the guy was probably going to beat Don through the door. Don couldn't help but love the whitest blondest man he ever

knew. Swimming forward Don is careful to keep his light trained on the doorway as he swims forward. As he gets up to the door he sees a large hole in the floor the size of a small semi. Around the dark circle inset stones have runes on them that Don cannot make out. All around them are skeletons on the floor. Some wearing robes, while others are wearing remnants of other clothes now gone to rags. Don wonders why the fabric has lasted so long. The place was flooded in the fifties if Delbert was to be believed.

Karl is currently bending over the nearest body and holding up some sort of symbol. Swimming over Don sees through the circle of glass on the helmet and the grin that Karl has is huge. Shining his light on the large coin like symbol he sees it is shiny beneath the tarnish. Daring to do something Delbert would balk at he takes out the dive knife and scratches it confirming the coin that is bigger than his face is indeed made of gold. Its weight alone makes it unwieldy to improvise as costume jewelry. Don wonders briefly what it was used for, but as he does so Karl has scoops up four more and hands them over and point back toward the dive basket.

Taking his cue Don struggles with the four coins and ends up dropping one on the entryway floor before turning around to swim back to the basket. Once at the dive basket he deposits them in the basket and gives it a couple of tugs then turns back to swim back into the church. Once inside the church he sees that Karl has started to slowly move from body to body and relieve them of the large coins. He has three more and some sort of thin metal tablets. It seems to have come from the podium in the room. Each tablet has deep etchings and the metal is quarter in thick.

Taking his dive knife again he scratches the patina from one and sees it too is a precious metal but the other two are of a different metal. Making an estimated guess, he judges the heavy one to

be gold and the others to be platinum and silver. Looking around, he scoops up the three tablets as they are a bit lighter. Swimming forward he gets to the basket once again. This time it is on its side. Turning it back over, he puts his payload into the basket and turns around. It is about time to call it quits. He is feeling the burn in his legs and the cold seep into his bones. Shining his light Don sees that Karl and he are of the same mind, because Karl is plodding back toward him. Karl is waving his arms. He has his hand around his air hose and is pointing up.

Realizing his friend may be in distress Dons slows his breathing down and tries to figure out a way to share air with his brother in law, and make it to the surface. Swimming closer to his family he sees an alien look ripple across his Karl's face, fear.

Spotting movement behind his friend Don tries to imagine what sort of fish Karl scared out of its hiding hole. Pulling out the K bar knife he got from a marine friend, Don tries to focus his sight on the movement behind Karl. At first his mind tricks him and makes out something like a shark because of the size, then the dive light illuminates the front of the white marble and the thing is revealed.

It looks mostly like a man in the torso with an octopus for a head and bat wings. Like a bullet is shears through the water with speed. As it reaches Karl it grabs his air hose with one webbed, clawed hand. With an easy tug it rips the hose out of the dive helmet. Don looks at Karl who is screaming one word, and pointing up.

"GO."

With a surge of anger Don refuses to leave a man behind. He swims forward as the thing begins ripping through Karl's suit like it is made of wet paper. Don stabs the creature in the arm once, twice before it seems to see him through the pink water. Once it does it slaps at Don and shreds his left forearm. Don Bane has never seen anything like this. Knowing he is fighting a losing battle, he looks

up and begins to swim up faster than he has ever swam before. An odd part of his mind wonders, if he is a faster swimmer than Karl today?

## GETAWAY

The sun beats a redness on the necks of Jose and Delbert as they watch over the side of the boat. The minutes ache on like years until two tugs stretch the rope taught twice. It takes both men to pull up the wet rope. It bites into Delbert's soft hands. He doesn't complain because he wants to pull up the basket and his friends and get out of here. There is something unnatural about the silent body of water with no swimmers or fish moving around. Hauling up the large coins Delbert is the first to wipe them off. Seeing the tarnished gold underneath, Jose gives a smile of triumph.

For Delbert a strange curiosity overcomes him he takes the coins over to the empty seat and fishes out some charcoal and the piece of the forgotten muslin that he was going to turn into canvas, then creates rubbing. He has to rub hard to get details through the muslin.

"Woohoo" Jose cries and gives Porter a hug.

"Yep they are gold all three of them. I have never seen the symbols on them before" Delbert says.

"Who gives a fuck college boy? If we need we can melt them down then we can spend them. That's a lot of gold. We are going to each be very well off, Del".

"Let's just wait and see what else they find. I really want to get out of here."

"Get outta' here? I am not turning this boat around until we get all that gold. How's the pump working Porter"?

"Looks fine, Sir.

"Watch for lots of air bubbles too. If there are too many then the suit might spring a leak. We need to haul Karl up in that case" Jose commands as he lowers the dive basket again.

While Jose watches over the side. Delbert continues to clean off the very large pentacles and make rubbings of each side of them. He had taken a little Latin in his college courses and he knows the language on the pentacles isn't remotely similar. Finally, giving up, Delbert throws one of the artifacts into Karl's, green military bag, Don's footlocker and one in Jose's beer cooler, respectively, before joining Jose on watch at the side of the boat.

Looking over the edge, both men see the tug on the basket line again. This time Delbert has enough sense to look around, spot and don a spare pair of work gloves. Putting them on, helps him get a grip on the line as he hauls the thick rope up for a second time. Both men strain to pull up the three metal tablets.

It takes Delbert a few minutes. The seaweed and growth almost seem to want to escape contact with the tablets as he wipes them clean. Taking an errant hand towel he wipes away sweat from his neck as he stares at the symbols and pictures. The carving is so deep that the images seem more like bas-relief and the writing is deeply carved. Reaching over, he snags the same roll of muslin and begins to rub the images into the cloth with the charcoal.

Jose stays on task cleaning the dive basket of and checks the diver's lines. They seem solid but as he looks into the water a great dark shade moves down under the waves. Something large in the water is moving fast in the direction of the boat. Porter sees tugs on the air hose and his eyes go wide.

"Pull him up. Pull up my Uncle!"

Nothing shocks men into action like the cry for help from a young child. Simultaneously the men are charged with power and purpose. Jose flings the heavy dive basket away to a corner of the deck as if its weight were of no more consequence than that of pillow. Likewise, Del drops the tablets and grabs the line. Both men fight furiously to pull in

the rope and get Karl moving in the right direction. Their arms pump like pistons as they watch the bubbles coming up. They work even faster when they see a rush of bubbles hit the surface. Hands continue to work overtime at pulling even when the hose comes up empty and ragged. It takes a few seconds as their tunnel vision closes on the ragged end of the hose. Both men start to kick off shoes and tear off clothes as they prepare to jump into the water. Jose suddenly stops stripping and has to physically put a hand on Delbert to stop him when the pinkish water comes to the surface. Delbert stops only briefly then continues to go over.

The only thing that stops Delbert is the shattering of the water's surface as Don comes up tearing at the side of the boat with one hand. Delbert's mind does not at first comprehend why his friend's other hand isn't reaching up as well. It isn't until Delbert is half in and half overboard, hauling his friend in that Del sees his friend's arm is missing from the elbow down.

"Karl's dead." Don croaks.

Jose does nothing to help Del. The man looks into the water and squints. Jose then frantically digs in the compartment beside the captain's seat. The oars are the first thing to get tossed aside then the rope, but finally Jose comes up with a shotgun.

Jose hauls out the shotgun and shoots in the water at the thing following him up. It stops its ascension when the fiery breath of the shotgun, spits lead pellets into the water. Jose keeps shooting into the water until Jose is hearing the shot gun make only the click shack click sound. Jose turns to the wheel and sends the boat forward full power.

Porter, who is staring bewildered at his dad, has enough frame of mind to act quickly, and cuts the anchor line. Then he turns back to his Dan.

"Dad, dad" he says as he sees the missing arm and the rending gashes in his father's chest.

Delbert grabs the canvas with the rubbing and begins to wrap the arms and the wounds on Don's

back. Finally thinking clearer he yanks off his belt and uses it as tourniquet. As Jose turns the boat back toward the dock Delbert presses the fabric to the chest wound.

Behind them the thing erupts out of the water into the sky. The bright sunlight seems in such contrast with the nightmare thing of wings, tentacles and claws. Porter's mind denies that anything of such hideousness should be allowed to be visible in the daylight. Monsters are supposed to exist at night. The boy is shocked and his gaze follows the creature as it crosses paths into the bright sun when none of the three pairs of eyes can follow even with a free hand covering their eyes, to shield them.

Jose turns the boat right then left as he tries to evade the flying thing. The thing mirrors the movements of the boat with each turn. Finally Delbert looks at his friend bleeding on the floor of the boat, and feels a strength in himself that he never knew he had, as it comes to the fore.

"Porter, Hold this on your dad's chest hard" he yells over the engine.

Porter leans forward and puts all his weight on the chest wound and the muslin. Delbert scrambles to retrieve the discarded shotgun and scans the storage it came out of it. Inside is a half a box of shells. Scooping it up, he juggles it and the rifle for a few seconds before bad luck strikes. Perhaps the gods feel things are going too well for the drifter because two things happen. The thing dives down at them and Jose jerks hard to port to avoid the thing. The shotgun shells bounce out of Delbert's hands and scatter, like teens at a party when their parents come home too soon.

The creature does not reach its clawed hands for any of them but for the discarded tablets. It would seem it too is sharing the bad luck because Del's reaction speed allows him to grasp two shells before they hit the deck. Even without military training Delbert is Nebraska raised and country trained.

Like the other four he learned how to load, shoot and clean rifles and shotguns as part of growing up.

Delbert's hands do the work of their own accord as his gaze follows the creature. It follows, and it is switching its feet, or whatever, to come forward to touch down on the boats deck. It seems to be looking at the tablets behind Porter. Porter is oblivious as his father's lips are moving. They are whispering something in the young man's ear while the creature closes in on them. Just as it is inches from touching the boat Delbert fires. It doesn't take rocket science to his something larger than a man at six feet with a 12 gauge firing double 00 buck shot. The effect was less than impressive. The creature is blown back ward but there is no ripping of flesh. The effect is a rippling across the thing's rough hide as if its fat were given a hard slap. Spinning in the air the thing rises back up and beats its wings to pursue again. Thinking quickly Del drops the shotgun and picks up the three tablets. Experimentally he throws the first one like a Frisbee expert that he is. The creature stops in place to hover, and its gaze shifts from the boat and the spot in the water where the tablet was dropped. Taking this fresh new inspiration as hope he flings the second tablet and drops the last overboard.

The thing plummets back into the water toward the spot where the last impromptu Frisbee went in.

"Hold on" Jose yells as he heads straight toward the dock.

The boat misses the dock and beaches on the sand throwing the four around. Jose jumps up first and takes his discarded shirt to replace the muslin while Delbert picks up the boy and sends him running toward the car.

"Karl's El Camino" Jose yells as he grabs the keys.

Both men carry Don's limp form to the back of the car and for the rest of the rip to the hospital Jose drives while Delbert and Porter keep pressure on Don's wounds as they ignore the obvious signs of lifelessness. The Paramedics come racing out of the emergency entrance to respond to the honking and screeching tires as the car grinds to a halt.

Getting out of the car Porter watched them take his Dad's body away.

"Ya' know what he said"? Porter said in a flat tone.

"No, what"? Delbert says with tears falling from his eyes.

"He said, be like Del. Read books, like Del."

Delbert's tears begin to run like water works and wetting the sweat and blood in Porter's shirt as he hugs the boy.

Later that week, Jose scoops up all Karl and Delbert's stuff into the military bag, and drops it off in Del's garage. Delbert never paints again. It sits in his garage until the day he dies. He is too interested in spending time with Milly and fighting off the nightmares. Neither of them lays eyes on the bag again.



# UP IN SMOKE

Some Small Luxuries

By Paul Riegel-Green

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY 1ST ED.

*It's late on a Friday night when you leave the club and head back home being unlucky at love again. On the way out you see a stack of the rags called the Cincinnati Riverfront News, an underground newspaper that is a mix of the underground scene, some articles you can't help but laugh at, and some that make you say "what the heck" after you read them. Tonight on page 5, you find this...*

## Cincinnati Riverfront News

### UP IN SMOKE

Over the last few years smoking has come back. It first started with the deregulation of all tobacco and marijuana. All new structures are built with superior filters in all air filtration systems that allow people to smoke inside again.

Proles are especially susceptible as they are provided a weekly allowance of tobacco or marijuana by the corporations. Many smokes are treated with GGH which is a very mild sedative to keep the masses happy in their position in life. Prole Basic cigarettes, Basic Hookah Tobacco, and Hand Roll also have HV added to make them even more addictive than normal.

After the legalization of marijuana, the tobacco lobby forced the opening up to having tobacco use deregulated. Soon cigarette and cigar bars were opening up and while not enjoyed everyplace, smoking became more and more socially acceptable. With the rise of the Proles the megacorps set up a smoke allowance for both cigarettes and hand roll (the street name for marijuana). The allowance for each adult Prole was set at one carton of ten packages (each package containing twenty cigarettes) or enough hand roll and papers for 200 rolled cigarettes a month. This allowance has been doubled by making it a carton and 200 rolled cigarettes. Proles can officially trade in portions of one for a like amount of the other. In addition, there is a thriving black market in the precincts trading this allowance for just about anything.

# PROTODIMENSION MAGAZINE

UP IN SMOKE

## SMOKING ITEMS:

**Prole Basic Cigarettes** come in a white package with a blue stripe running from the left upper corner to the right lower corner. It has a black PB, for Prole Basic on the front and back cover. The thin paper wrapper contains twenty cigarettes. In addition built into the front cover is a set of twenty matches and a striker, which is notorious for its inability to light. Inside the back cover is built in a small tin foil ash tray commonly used by the proles. These cigarettes have been known to be very addictive. Weight Negligible Price \$1 Availability (V/V) Special Available with Prole Tobacco Allowance

**Reynolds-Morris Superior Cigarettes** come in a gold colored foil package with a simple number 1 on the front and back. The pack is thicker than a Prole Basic Cigarette pack because it contains thirty cigarettes. These are smoother smoking and not as addictive as Prole Basic Cigarettes. Weight Negligible Price \$5 Availability (V/V) Special -

**Reynolds-Morris Sweet Cigarillos:** These are a small cigar with the convenience of a cigarette. They come in a purple and black package containing five Cigarillos with yellow Sweets emblazoned on the front. They are not filtered but do not need clipped like normal cigars and are as easy to light as a cigarette. Weight Negligible Price \$5 Availability (V/V) Special -

**Reynolds-Morris Fine Cigars:** These are the cigar that is enjoyed by most of the population. They come in a plastic tube to help preserve them for sale, when not sold in special cigar shops,

and prevent damage to the cigar. The container has a red top with a black F on it, and a red band around the cigar itself, to make sure that everyone knows it's a Reynolds-Morris Fine Cigar. Typical of most cigars they have to have the end clipped and takes a bit of effort to light. Weight Negligible Price \$5 Availability (V/V) Special -

**Cuban State Factories Castro Cigars:** The Castro Cigar is the finest cigar in the world. These are still hand rolled and the main export from the island of Cuba. They are only sold in special cigar stores that have special humidors just set for the Castros, as they are commonly referred to. When sold they are given a metal case with lid to protect the cigar in transit. As with all cigars they have to have the end clipped and takes a bit of effort to light. Weight Negligible Price \$20 Availability (S/V) Special -

**Reynolds-Morris Cigar Cutter:** This stainless steel cigar cutter used to cut and trim the ends of the cigar before smoking. Weight Negligible Price \$10 Availability (V/V) Special -

**Reynolds-Morris Portable Humidor:** This humidor holds up to 12 cigars while being under 2 inches in height. It is covered in an artificial leather. Weight 0.5 Kg Price \$150 Availability (V/V) Special -

**IKEA Tabletop Humidor:** This is a glass, lockable humidor designed to be set on a tabletop and containing up to six 12 count or three 24 count cigar boxes. Being from IKEA it takes about

thirty minutes to put together. Weight 4 Kg Price \$175 Availability (S/C) Special -

**BBB Manufacturing Humidor and Cooler:** This is a stainless steel humidor that regulated temperature, humidity and light to keep the cigars in the ultimate smoking condition. It holds up to four 24 count cigar boxes. Weight 10 Kg Price \$280 Availability (R/S) Special -

**BBB Manufacturing Pipe:** This is the pipe used by a majority of smokers of pipes today. It's about 5.5" in length with a black tip and a brown wood look bowl. Weight 0.1 Kg Price \$20 Availability (V/V) Special -

**Bezobovo Ventures Hand Carved Pipe:** These are pipes with a bone tip and a hand carved wooden bowl. They run from 6" to 8" in length. Weight 0.1 Kg Price \$60 Availability (S/C) Special -

**Reynolds-Morris Vapor:** This is called Vapor or E Cigarette. It is an electronic form of cigarette that is usually used to smoke tobacco but can also be used to smoke Hand Roll. It does not require a lighter but must be recharged after two smokes. They come in a package of 4 E Cigarettes a charger and a four extra tobacco refill cells. Weight .1 Kg Price \$45 Availability (C/V) Special -

**Bezobovo Ventures Hookah Pipe:** This pipe is designed to sit on a table while up to four smokers draw from the water pipe while the tobacco, or other substance smoked is placed in the

# PROTODIMENSION MAGAZINE

UP IN SMOKE

top of the pipe. Specialty spiced and sweet tobaccos cost 25-75% more than normal hand roll. Weight 3 Kg Price \$170 Availability (S/C) Special -

**Loose Tobacco:** This consists of loose tobacco that can be rolled into papers, used in Pipes, Vapors, or in Hookah pipes. There is enough tobacco there for up to 50 smokes. Weight .5 Kg Price \$2 Availability (V/V) Special: Available with Prole Tobacco Allowance (Pipe/Hookah Specialty Tobacco) Weight .5 Kg Price \$3.5-\$5 Availability (S/C) Special -

**Rolling Papers:** This are papers designed to be custom made by the individual containing tobacco or hand roll. There are 25 papers per pack. Weight Negligible Price: \$1 Availability: (V/V) Special: Available with Prole Tobacco Allowance

**Hand Roll:** Hand roll has had many names of its long history mostly marijuana, weed, reefer, etc. While no longer illegal it still isn't smoked at work or in public other than the precincts. This is the standard as far as quality or strength. The pack has enough for 25 smokes See Gear Up for effects of addiction. Weight .25 Kg Price \$100 Availability (S/V) Special -

**Gold Hand Roll:** This is a much higher quality hand roll which gives a longer high but also is more addictive, see Gear Up for effects of addiction. The pack has enough for 25 smokes. Weight .25 Kg Price \$250 Availability (R/C) Special -

**Lighter, BBB Manufacturing Z Disposable:** This is a small plastic lighter, the kind that is very common. Weight Negligible Price \$2 Availability (V/V) Special – (source Gear Up)

**Lighter, Zippo:** This is a metal cased lighter, in many cases engraved. Weight Negligible Price \$50 Availability (S/C) Special - (source Gear Up)

**Ashtray:** These are lightweight disposable ashtray. Weight Negligible Price \$1 Availability (V/V) Special -

## BEVERAGES:

**Anheuser-Bush-Coors Beer:** This is the standard bottle or pint of beer or ale. Weight 0.25 Kg Price \$5 Availability (V/V) Special -

**Guinness-Adams Craft Lager:** This is a beer with a much deeper flavor in a bottle or a pint glass. Weight 0.25 Kg Price \$10 Availability: (C/V) Special: -

**Wine, Bottle:** This is a bottle of a standard wine. There are 12 glasses in a bottle. Weight 1 Kg Price \$30 Availability (C/V) Special - (source Gear Up)

**Fine Wine, Bottle:** This is a full bottle of a wine that is considered far better than the standard. There are 12 small glasses in a bottle. Weight 0.5 Kg Price \$250 Availability (S/C) Special - (source Gear Up)

**Daniels-Bacardi Hard Liquor Bottle:** This is a bottle of a given hard liquor. There are 20 shots or mixed drinks in a bottle. Weight 1 Kg Price \$25 Availability (V/V) Special -

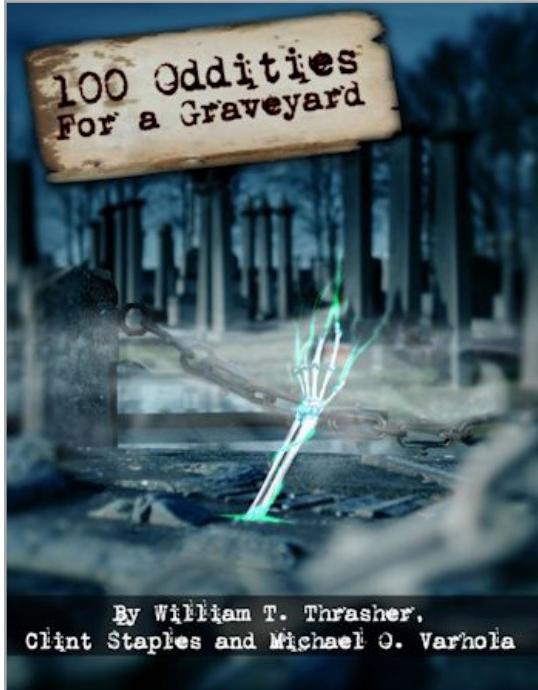
**Daniels-Bacardi Pre-Mixed Drink Bottle:** This is a drink containing both alcohol and mixers. Weight Negligible Price \$15 Availability (V/V) Special -



# REVIEW: 100 ODDITIES FOR A GRAVEYARD

A product review

Review by Eric Fabischi  
FOR WEIRD SOURCES



**100 ODDITIES FOR A GRAVEYARD** from Skirmisher Publishing is a great ten page pdf of adventure location and adventure setting dressing for your adventures. This book is system agnostic and will fit just about any game system and this is a good pdf to acquire for both modern and old school systems. But is it actually useful for the gaming table? Well let's dive into this book Basically, **100 Oddities for a Graveyard** is a series of random d100 charts that can add interesting game adventure elements to an adventure location. This enables with a toss of the dice a DM to add in a whole evening's encounters for a game. Graveyards have always been the domain of horror films and survival horror adventures, but this book gives a ton of interesting side bits to sneak into an adventure.

This includes a dice rolling sub-system often referred to as "Exploding Dice." In this sub-system, a die that rolls the maximum value possible [i.e. a 6 on a d6] is rolled again, and the new value is added to the previous total. This continues until a value other than the maximum is rolled. So, you might roll a d8 and get 8, then roll again, get another 8, and then, on a third roll, get a 3. You would then stop and total the results, in this case a 19 [8+8+3].

When we are referring to an exploding die roll, you will see a lower case "x" after the die notation, as in "d10x."

With some of the encounters this adds an element of weirdness and some horror to some of the results, but on the whole the book provides a whole host of adventure elements that can change up a rather mundane romp through a grave yard location. An example of what you'll find in this book includes the following:

"An arch of stone creating a portal over the head of a grave. Directly over the top of the arch, the stones frame a circular hole. Local legend recounts varying tales of what happens when someone stands on the grave and gazes upon the

moon or sun through the hole over the arch; stories of mystical portals, visitors from other realms, glimpses of the future or the past, or a departed love one are but a few."

The graveyard isn't usually the first adventure location that leaps to a DM's mind but this book basically provides all of the weirdness that you want to be inserted right into the back end of their campaigns with little issue. For a dollar this is a pretty solid investment for any new or old school gaming system. William Thrasher's artwork adds a sense of whimsy and weirdness to the book. Don't let that comment fool you, there's enough here to keep even a group of **Call of Cthulhu** investigators guessing at least for a night or two.

This product is also great to add into games such as **Over the Edge** where the weird and unusual not only is an adventure hook but the oddities will keep players on their toes and offer an adventure hook to keep a campaign going for months at a clip. The ability for game masters to sprinkle these weird and unusual bits & pieces in where they like is one of the strengths of this product.

This is one of the things that this book excels at, keeping adventure encounters moving so that you can get to the heart and soul of your main adventure location. This is a central strength of this Oddities volume; grave yards have always held deep symbolism in occult or death practices for investigative horror games such as **Call of Cthulhu**, and a product of this nature adds even more weirdness to the clues, signs, and other unusual bits that crop up during play. These can be used as hooks, lines, and sinkers especially for the deeper parts of the Dreamlands and the Underworld location of that accursed place. Alien god's graves, ancient battle sites, fringe dimensional cemetery locations, and the realms of Lovecraftian ghouls are all perfect fodder to add in **100 Oddities for a Graveyard**.

Personally I'd use this book with a mix of post-apocalyptic and straight up dark fantasy, and in fact many of the encounters and ideas in 100 **Oddities for a Graveyard** lend themselves to a mix of games. The PC's stumbling onto a post-apocalyptic graveyard adventure location could easily support the material in this ten page pdf. With a toss of the dice a DM could dress different parts of an adventure location quite easily. This book can add a sense of the epic and weird to a simple romp through a grave yard. Seriously there are some great encounters to unleash on players and their PC's.

Do I think that it's worth the download price? Yes I do indeed! Many of the encounters sound like they'd be perfect to add into a Phantasm movie-like campaign or as fodder for a quick horror movie encounter. The idea of outdoor adventure crawling among the grave stones is pretty appealing for a post-apocalyptic or more modern survival horror style of game. This makes One Hundred Oddities a great lead in or middle gap adventure product for games such as White Wolf's **Vampire the Masquerade** or **Werewolf the Apocalypse** where journeys into the Spirit Realms are always fraught with danger. There have been several adventures where forays into alien cemeteries have lead into deeper adventures that held all kinds of meanings and strange twisted symbolisms. The Silent Striders tribe's players would especially be easy to snare with some of the more unusual items from this product.

The game master could with a bit of work add in background and history to many of the encounters and items found within the book. The same with many of items and encounters for the various vampire clans Giovanni spring to mind immediately. Many of these oddities can be the entire goal of an evening's adventure where the tables are suddenly turned on the monsters and even during the lives of immortals surprise is still an emotion that can jar the most jaded senses.

Because this book is system neutral it can be added right into the back end of ongoing campaigns and encounters become much more unpredictable and dangerous during play. As PC's get caught up in the center of the plot of your adventure, suddenly something unusual added in may become a much more interesting adventure element. These interesting and unusual throw away elements can add a needed twist to an otherwise routine trip through a cemetery. Mention something weird and they'll make a note of it and want to return to it. This is your opportunity to add a horrific flare and reel them into your next adventure or the next leg of your campaign.

All in all I think that game masters might want to give One Hundred Oddities for a Grave Yard a spin and see if it's right for them. Drivethrurpg and Rpgnow are always having sales and this is one to watch for and a title to grab when you can. I've been using this title now in my own games for a bit and it's a blast to add in to horror role playing games.



# CORPORATE SECURITY

*How it's done in the Greater Depression*

By Paul Riegel-Green

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY 1ST ED.

*Walking down the street in the sprawling Cincinnati Metroplex you see a stack of the Cincinnati Riverfront News piled on the corner. It is a small underground newspaper run out of who knows were but does have some stories that are a good laugh (The "Ohio River Monster"), and then there is this:*

## ***The Cincinnati Riverfront News***

### **THE CORPORATE SECURITY APPARATUS**

*(Cincinnati Metroplex) by Jane Smith*  
While the corporate big wigs sit in their Ivory tower down at the Riverfront their minions the Corporate Security Force is out putting their boot on the throats of any that step out of line. We live under the bear that the blue berets will come crashing in our door at any time. This article is to expose them. The PGJ&J Corporate Security Force is divided into six divisions: General Patrol, Trooper, Investigative, Enforcement, Protection, and Special Intelligence Divisions.

The lowest rung are the General Patrol Troopers. These have supplanted the normal police forces in many areas like bot cities, and

their precincts but have also been seen in mike town. They have a blue *Saucer Cap*, blue *Standard Uniform*, steel *Corporate Security Badge* with the crescent moon and stars logo of Proctor Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, a blue *RamTech LT2000 Light Undercover Armor Vest*, blue *Leather Dress Gloves*, and black shined *Dress Shoes*. They wear a blue leather *Utility Belt* with a *Taser* on the side of the handedness of the trooper. Also on the belt is a *Teledyne Police Hand Held Radio* with a *Motorola-Samsung SR2 Shoulder Radio*, a *Security*

*Industries 250 Telescoping Baton*, up to a dozen pairs of *Raven Industries Plastic Handcuffs*, a *Security Industries Commercial Mace*, and a *Law Enforcement Limited Maximum Flashlight*, and a security badge scanner / ticket printer machine. In their breast pocket they always have a small pad and pen.

They usually patrol in pairs and have a Corporate *Ford-Revoln Fusion Hybrid*. It is dark blue with a crescent moon and stars on the hood, as well as the front two of four doors, and a police light bar on the roof. The front seats include a corporate security *Zenith FX2 Laptop* and *Teledyne Police Car Radio* and has a *Law Enforcement Limited Mass CS Sprayer* and two *Czech State Factories Kent State Riot Batons* locked between the two front seats. The back seats are in a cage and the doors can only be opened from the outside of the car. In the trunk, which had been reinforced is a Patrol Box as well as a *Beretta-Colt Benelli Nova Pump Tactical 12 Gauge Shotgun*, and two *Beretta-Colt M9 Commercial Pistols*. The shotgun is loaded with *Bean Bag Shots* and the M9s have two additional magazines each all stored in locked vehicle-mounted gun safe.

General Patrol Troopers receive little training other than to be able to identify some fake ID's, deal with drunks and rowdy citizens, and to report crime scenes and other suspicious activities further up the chain of command. While they are supplied in their cars with lethal weapons there has never been a case that the corporation has find that justified its use. They, for the most part are easy going as long as they don't know you're pulling a fast one on them or you're not in an area you don't belong. Their supervisors, which are called rarely when they can't resolve, are equipped as Patrol Troopers but are drawn from the ranks of the most experienced General Patrol Troopers.

These troopers are almost never seen in the Ant Hills or the Burbs, unless they are just driving

through. They are never seen in Crop Farms (unless working for the Agricorps), Dreamland, Demonground, or Precincts other than those owned by the corporation for which they work for.

The next step up the ladder of Corporate Security is the Trooper division. This division is divided between Patrol and Guard Sections. Both, unless otherwise specified, are dressed in a blue *Saucer Cap*, blue *Standard Uniform*, brass *Corporate Security Badge* with the crescent moon and stars logo, a blue *Miltech Limited Undercover Vest*, blue *Leather Dress Gloves*, and black shined *Dress Shoes*. They wear a blue leather *Utility Belt* with a *Beretta-Colt M9 Commercial Pistol*, two additional magazines, a *Taser*, with two additional dart sets. Also on the belt is a *Teledyne Police Hand Held Radio* with a *Motorola-Samsung SR2 Shoulder Radio*, a *Security Industries 250 Telescoping Baton*, up to a set of *Law Enforcement Limited Standard Handcuffs*, a *Security Industries Commercial Mace*, and a *Law Enforcement Limited Maximum Flashlight*, and a security badge scanner / ticket machine. In their breast pocket they always have a small pad and pen.

The Patrol Section are divided into Foot Patrols, Car Patrols, and Supervisors. They all are equipped with the basic equipment. Foot Patrols are two man teams who patrol sensitive buildings and Dreamland. They receive firearms, hand to hand training, as well as training in observation. Car Patrols are rare but they are single person with either equipped with a *Ford-Revlon Hydrogen Cell Taurus* or a *Wilson Rawlings Golf Cart*, depending on the area to be patrolled. Supervisors have the same types of vehicles the car patrols do.

Foot Patrols are the one most citizens run into on a daily basis. They also receive training in etiquette and forgery to better detect bad ID's and passes. They walk the promenade of Dreamland and internal security for all sensitive corporate

buildings. They also, in most cases are the first to respond to calls for help.

Car Patrols are always single man and in the *Ford Revlon Hydrogen Cell Taurus* are used to patrol sensitive corporate facilities where they don't want the General Patrol Troopers going. Car Patrols in the *Wilson Rawlings Golf Cart* are used in the Parking structure and promenade of Dreamland.

The *Ford-Revlon Hydrogen Cell Taurus Patrol Cars* is dark blue with a crescent moon and stars on the hood and front two of four doors, a police light bar on the roof, and reinforced front bumpers. The front seats include a corporate security *Zenith FX2 Laptop* and *Teledyne Police Car Radio* and has a *Law Enforcement Limited Mass CS Sprayer* and a *Czech State Factories Kent State Riot Baton*, and a *Beretta-Colt Benelli Nova Pump Tactical 12 Gauge Shotgun* locked between the two front seats. In the front glove compartment is an *Ace 13W White Light Floodlight*. The back seats are in a cage and the doors can only be opened from the outside of the car. In the trunk, which had been reinforced is a *Patrol Box* as well as a *Beretta-Colt M-4 Assault Rifle*, with three magazines, and two *CS Emitter Hand Grenades* and an *Miltech Limited M-40 Gas Mask*.

The *Wilson Rawlings Golf Carts* are equipped with a *Teledyne Police Car Radio* and a *Kent State Riot Baton* locked underneath the front of the seat. It is dark blue in color with a crescent moon and stars on the front panel and a police light bar on the roof. The seat beside the driver is equipped with permanently attached *Law Enforcement Limited Standard Handcuffs* so that a prisoner can be secured. In the golf club compartment in the rear is a *Patrol Box*, a locked box containing an *Ace 13W White Light Floodlight*, two more magazines for the *Beretta-Colt M9 Commercial Pistol*, four more dart sets for the *Taser*, a dozen pairs of *Raven Industries Plastic Handcuffs*, and a *Law Enforcement Limited Mass CS Sprayer*.

Patrol Supervisors are seasoned patrol troopers and are equipped as normal patrol troopers with the exception of their chevrons of rank on their sleeves. They have vehicles as the car patrols other than the weapons contained in the vehicles. The *Ford-Revlon Hydrogen Cell Taurus Patrol Car* has its normal *Beretta-Colt Benelli Nova Pump Tactical 12 Gauge Shotgun* locked between the two front seats but it is initially filled with *Bean Bag Shotgun Shells*. Locked in the trunk is a *Beretta-Colt Benelli Nova Pump Tactical 12 Gauge Shotgun* with normal shells, a *Beretta-Colt M-4 Assault Rifle* with an *M-203 Grenade Launcher* slung underneath. It also contains four magazines for the *Beretta-Colt M-4 Assault Rifle*, four magazines for the *Beretta-Colt M9 Commercial Pistol*, and two *40mm Flash-Bang Grenades*, two *40mm CS Grenades*, one *40mm Smoke Grenade* and one *40mm DP grenade* for the *M-203 Grenade Launcher*.

The Guard Section operate in four man teams. The senior man having a *Beretta-Colt Benelli Nova Pump Tactical 12 Gauge Shotgun* slung across his back and equipped with an *Engine Buster Shell* followed by normal shotgun shells. The second man, called the Director, because he directs individuals and vehicles encountered were to go for inspection is equipped with a *Netgun* across his back. The third man is the Inspector and he has a *Security Industries V12 Vehicular Inspection Mirror* and a *Dazzle Light*. Often times the Inspector also carries a *Grumman D2 Geiger Counter* and *Czech State Industries C-2 Chemical Detection Kit*. The last man of the team is the Dog Handler. He lacks the *Beretta-Colt M9 Commercial Pistol* as the gunpowder could lead the dog to give a false positive. Instead he carries a *Law Enforcement Limited Mass CS Sprayer*. The dog is trained to find explosives, gun powder, and street drugs in addition to being a trained attack dog.

Guard Section Supervisors are usually given jobs of watching monitors and acting as entrance

guards at highly secured facilities. They are equipped as normal Patrol Troopers.

A select group of supervisors form the Quick Response Team. They are each equipped with an *Urban Camouflage Battle Dress Uniform*, a blue *Kevlar Helmet* with a white crescent moon and stars (symbol of Proctor, Gamble, Johnson & Johnson), a *Security Industries CF2 Carbon Fiber Vest*, a *Miltech Limited CR110 Concealed Radio*, a brass *Corporate Security Badge* with a QRT number, blue *Leather Dress Gloves*, black shined *Combat Boots*. They wear a blue leather *Utility Belt* with a *Beretta-Colt M9 Commercial Pistol* with two additional magazines, a dozen pairs of *Raven Industries Plastic Handcuffs*, *Security Industries 250 Telescoping Baton*, a *Law Enforcement Limited Maximum Flashlight*, a *Flash-Bang Hand Grenade* and a *CS Emitter Hand Grenade*. On the thigh opposite of the *Beretta-Colt* is a *Thigh Gas Mask Case* containing a *Miltech Limited M-40 Gas Mask*.

The leader carries a *Beretta-Colt M-4 Assault Rifle* with a *Folding Stock*, a *Stock Pistol Grip*, and three magazines, a *Concussion Hand Grenade* and a pair of *Miltech Limited Multiband IR/UV Goggles*. The second man is the breacher who carries a *Beretta-Colt Benelli Nova Pump Tactical 12 Gauge Shotgun* equipped with an *Engine Buster Shell* followed by normal shotgun shells, and may have a *BBB Manufacturing Halligan* or a *Law Enforcement Limited Big Kick Battering Ram*. The third man is the Grenadier and he has a *Beretta-Colt M-4* with an *M-203 Grenade Launcher* slung underneath. He carries two *40mm Flash-Bang Grenades*, two *40mm CS Grenades*, one *40mm Smoke Grenade* and one *40mm DP grenade* for the *M-203*. The fourth man is the shooter. He is equipped as the rest of the team but also carries a *Beretta-Colt M-4* with a *Match Grade Barrel*, a *Bipod* and a *Teledyne Catseye Starlight Scope*.

The next link in the chain is the Investigation Division. These are made up of plain clothed officers

who are investigate crimes against the megacorp. They have a lot of training in interrogation, observation, crime scene evidence retrieval, as well as firearms and hand to hand combat skills. They are always dressed in *Civilian Business* attire, and shined black *Dress Shoes*. They also carry a gold *Corporate Security Badge* with an ID, a *Beretta PX4 Storm Compact 9mm* in either a *Bianchi Belt Holster* or a *Bianchi Shoulder Holster*, *Security Industries Commercial Mace*, a special *Apple-IBM SP2000 Smart Phone* that can also communicate directly onto police radio bands as well as cellular phone frequencies, and a pair of *Standard Handcuffs*. Some Investigative Division officer wear a *Ramtech LT2000 Light Undercover Vest* under their shirt and coat, but most go without under normal circumstances.

They drive a four door *Ford-Revlon Hydrogen Fuel Cell Escape* with hidden *Police Lights* built into the cars grill and across the top of the front and rear windows. The car has a special locked compartment in the center console that contains an *Apple-IBM 7500 Tablet* hidden from view when not out being used. Locked in the card glove compartment are two additional magazines for the *Beretta PX4 Storm Compact 9mm*, a box of *Latex Gloves*, a set of *Zeiss-Krupp 4x Commercial Binoculars*, and a *Law Enforcement Limited Maximum Flashlight*. The area behind the back seat contains a vehicular safe built in and accessed through the rear hatch. The vehicle safe includes a *Beretta-Colt M-4 Assault Rifle* with a *Folding Stock*, a *Stock Pistol Grip*, and three magazines, a *Beretta-Colt Benelli Nova Pump Tactical 12 Gauge Shotgun* with 20 rounds of normal shotgun shells in a bandoleer, Three additional magazines for the *Beretta PX4 Storm Compact 9mm*, a *Law Enforcement Limited E1 Evidence Collection Kit*, a *Nikon SPS5000 Professional Camera* with *Fuji Professional Film*, and two *RamTech Assault Tactical Vests*.

Meeting the Enforcement Division will always make your day a bad one. They wear a blue, black and white camouflaged *Battle Dress Uniform* with spit shined black *Combat Boots*. On their head they wear either a blue *Beret* with a crescent moon and stars flash or a *Kevlar Helmet* with a built in *Headset Radio* in the same camouflage as their battle dress and having the crescent moon and stars on the left side. In addition, most times they were a blue, black and white camouflage set of *Dragonskin Armor* emblazoned on the right chest with a silver *Corporate Security Badge*. They wear *Web Belt* and *Suspenders* with a holster carrying a *Beretta-Colt M9 Commercial Pistol* with two additional magazines, a dozen pairs of *Raven Industries Plastic Handcuffs*, *Security Industries 250 Telescoping Baton*, a *Law Enforcement Limited Maximum Flashlight*, a *Flash-Bang Hand Grenade* and a *CS Emitter Hand Grenade*. On the thigh opposite of the *Beretta-Colt* is a *Thigh Gas Mask Case* containing a *Miltech Limited M-40 Gas Mask*.

The Enforcement Division travels in 6 man teams. Each man is well trained in the use of all kinds or weapons and interrogation and intimidation. They travel in an armored *Ford-Revlon Transit Van* with outward facing seats in the rear and sliding doors on both sides. There is a *Winch* on the front capable of ripping bars off of windows or doors. There are concealed *Police Lights* hidden in the grill and along the top of the front and rear windshields. The vehicle has the body armored and bullet resistant glass.

The first man in the Enforcement Division team is the Leader. He is equipped with a headset radio that operates on both his teams' frequency and the normal police band. He carries a *Beretta-Colt M-4 Assault Rifle* with a *Folding Stock*, a *Stock Pistol Grip*, and three magazines, a *Concussion Hand Grenade*, a pair of *Czech State Factories 9000 Infrared Binoculars*, and a pair of *Miltech Limited Multiband IR/UV Goggles*.

The second man is the driver. During most operations he remains with the vehicle. He has just the normal gear of all members of unit.

The third man is called the Knocker. In addition to the normal gear he carries a *Beretta-Colt Benelli Nova Pump Tactical 12 Gauge Shotgun* equipped with an *Engine Buster Shell* followed by normal shotgun shells, and may have a *BBB Manufacturing Halligan* and a *Law Enforcement Limited Big Kick Battering Ram* in a *Grizzly 245 Manual Entry Tool Backpack*.

The fourth man is the Grenadier. He has a *Beretta-Colt M-4* with an *M-203 Grenade Launcher* slung underneath. He carries two *40mm Flash-Bang Grenades*, two *40mm CS Grenades*, one *40mm Smoke Grenade* and one *40mm DP grenade* for the *M-203*.

The fifth man is the Muscle. He is equipped with a *Beretta-Colt M-4 Assault Rifle* with a *Folding Stock*, a *Stock Pistol Grip*, and four magazines, two *Concussion Hand Grenades*, two *CS Emitter Hand Grenades*, two *Flash Bang Hand Grenades*, two *Fragmentation Hand Grenades*, four pair of *Law Enforcement Limited Standard Handcuffs*, and a pair of *Miltech Limited Multiband IR/UV Goggles*.

The last man is the Shooter. He is equipped as the rest of the team but also carries a *Beretta-Colt M-4* with a *Match Grade Barrel*, a *Bipod* and a *Teledyne Catseye Starlight Scope*.

Each of the higher ups in the Megacorps is assigned a six man team from the Protection Division. The six person group is broken down into two person teams. They work 12 hour shifts with one shift on two shifts off schedule. They can be assigned to a person or a site frequented by a protectee. In addition, there are teams that can be called on to cover events. In addition, all drivers are trained to the standards of the Protection Division.

Protection Division members are highly skilled in firearms, hand to hand combat, and observation.

The two man teams have a leader and a protector. The team member has are always dressed in *Civilian Business attire* over a *Miltech Limited Undercover Vest*, and shined black *Dress Shoes*. They also carry a gold *Corporate Security Badge with a P with an ID*, *Beretta-Colt PX4 Storm Type F Compact 9mm* in a *Bianchi Shoulder Holster*, *Security Industries Commercial Mace*, and a *Security Industries 250 Telescoping Baton*. Unlike other corporate security officers these officers are equipped with armor piercing rounds.

The protector also is equipped with a *Beretta-Colt 93 R Submachinegun* slung underneath their jacket. In all protectee cars there are *Beretta-Colt 93 R Submachineguns* next to the driver and team leader positions in the car.

The Protection Division uses the *Ford-Revlon Lincoln MKZ*, with a fully armored passenger compartment, run flat tires, an semi-armored engine compartment, with a run dry (can run for 100 miles at full power without coolant), and a blast deflector bottom to make it resistant to mines and IEDs.

The highest and most secretive is the Special Intelligence Division. These men wear no uniforms and are most commonly called Trouble Shooters or Fixers. The Special Intelligence Division is very fluid as many are hired for a specific mission and after that they go onto the next job to the highest bidder. Some have a strong moral code and others don't care about collateral damage as long as the job gets done.

On top of that you can't forget about all the surveillance cameras, placed to "monitor traffic". In addition, the corporate security has the ability to pull video from any commercial surveillance camera in Cincinnati.

Lastly, they have an extensive drone selection. They use BBB Manufacturing Small Drones commonly for patrolling and general surveillance. The LG Supplier Medium Drones are brought out when there is a serious situation, like a riot, chase,

or hostage situations. The LG Supplier Medium Drones have been modified to carry a *Flash Bang Hand Grenade*, or a *CS Emitter Hand Grenade*, or a *Nikon Ball Camera*.

So, keep your head on a swivel and watch each other's backs as they are out there.

New Careers - For those of you interested in corporate security careers here they are.

### General Patrol Trooper

Entry Requirements: -

First Term Skills: Melee Combat, Observation

Subsequent Term Skills: Choose up to 2 of the following per term: Melee Combat, Vehicle Use, Observation, Small Arms, Tracking, Interrogation, and Forgery

Contacts: -

Special: -

### Patrol Trooper

Entry Requirements: 1 Term Military, Police, or General Patrol Trooper

First Term Skills: Melee Combat, Observation, Small Arms

Subsequent Term Skills: Choose up to 3 of the following per term: Melee Combat, Vehicle Use, Observation, Small Arms, Tracking, Interrogation, Intimidation, Streetwise, or Forgery

Contacts: -

Special: -

# PROTODIMENSION MAGAZINE

## CORPORATE SECURITY

### **Patrol Trooper Supervisor**

Entry Requirement: 1 term Patrol Trooper, Guard Section Supervisor, or Military Officer and a 2d6 roll of 7+ (+1 DM per term as Patrol Trooper or Military Officer) If failed and Patrol Trooper remains Patrol Trooper otherwise can choose another career this term.

First Term Skills: Observation, Interrogation, Leadership

Subsequent Term Skills: Choose up to 3 of the following skills: Melee Combat, Vehicle Use, Observation, Small Arms, Tracking, Interrogation, Intimidation, Leadership, and Stalking

Contacts: One Criminal, Police or Corporate Security  
Special: -

### **Guard Section Trooper**

Entry Requirement: 1 term Patrol Trooper, Military Combat Arms, or Military Officer

First Term Skills: Small Arms, Vehicle Use, Intimidation

Subsequent Term Skills: Choose up to 3 of the following per term: Melee Combat, Vehicle Use, Observation, Small Arms, Tracking, Interrogation, Intimidation, Leadership, and Stalking

Contacts: One Criminal, Police, or Corporate Security

Special: -

### **Guard Section Supervisor**

Entry Requirement: 1 term Patrol Trooper, Guard Trooper, or Military Officer

First Term Skills: Small Arms, Intimidation, Forgery

Subsequent Term Skills: Choose up to 3 of the following per term: Vehicle Use, Observation, Small Arms, Streetwise, Tracking, Interrogation, Intimidation, or Leadership

Contacts: One Criminal, Police, or Corporate Security

Special: -

### **Quick Response Team**

Entry Requirement: 1 term Guard Section Supervisor, or Military Officer and a 2d6 roll of 7+ (+1 DM per term as Patrol Trooper or Military Officer) If failed and Guard Section Supervisor remains Guard Section Supervisor otherwise can choose another career this term. Or 1 term as Special Forces

First Term Skills: Melee Combat, Small Arms, Intimidation

Subsequent Term Skills: Choose up to 3 of the following per term: Melee Combat, Vehicle Use, Observation, Small Arms, Tracking, Interrogation, Intimidation,



Stalking, and Heavy Weapons  
Contacts: One Criminal, Police, or Corporate Security

Special: -

### Investigator

Entry Requirements: 1 Term as Patrol Trooper Supervisor, Guard Section Supervisor, or 2 terms as Police Officer

First Term Skills: Observation, Interrogation, Intimidation, and Persuasion

Subsequent Terms: Choose up to 4 of the following per term: Appraisal, Computer Operations, Forgery, Interrogation, Intimidation, Language, Leadership, Luck, Observation, Persuasion, Psychology, Small Arms, Streetwise, or Vehicle Use

Contacts: One Criminal, Police, Corporate Security, or Corporate

Special: -

### Undercover

Entry Requirements: 2 Terms as Investigator, or 1 and only 1 Term as General Patrol Trooper, Patrol Trooper, or Guard Section Trooper. The latter group must roll a 9+ or else may select another career for this term.

First Term Skills: Observation, Persuasion, Disguise, Act/Bluff and one of the following Appraisal, Bomb Making, Computer Operations, Escape Artist, Lock Pick, Luck, Forgery, or Gunsmithing

Subsequent Terms: Choose up to 4 of the

following per term: Observation, Persuasion, Disguise, Act/Bluff, Small Arm, Melee Combat, Appraisal, Bomb Making, Computer Operations, Escape Artist, Lock Pick, Luck, Forgery, or Gunsmithing

Contacts: One Criminal

Special: Must roll a 12+ (+1 DM per term) to "Go Native" and spend next term as a Criminal or Addict

### Protection Team

Entry Requirements: 1 Term as Investigator, Undercover, Quick Response Team, or Military Special Forces, or 2 terms as Military Officer, or 3 Terms as Patrol Trooper Supervisor, Guard Section Supervisor.

First Term Skills: Small Arms, Intimidation, Observation, and Leadership

Subsequent Terms: Choose up to 4 of the following per term: Observation, Intimidation, Disguise, Act/Bluff, Small Arm, Melee Combat, Bomb Making, Computer Operations, Luck, or Forgery

Contacts: One Police, Corporate Security, or Corporate

Special: -

### Troubleshooter

Entry Requirements: 2 terms as Investigator, Protection Team, Special Forces, or 3 terms as Military Officer

First Term Skills: Intimidation, Persuasion, Observation, and Act/Bluff

Subsequent Terms: Choose up to 4 of the

following per term: Observation, Intimidation, Disguise, Act/Bluff, Small Arm, Melee Combat, Bomb Making, Computer Operations, Luck, or Forgery

Contacts: Two Criminal, Police, Corporate Security, or Corporate

Special: -

### Fixer

Entry Requirements: 1 term as Investigator, Protection Team, Special Forces, or 2 terms as Military Officer

First Term Skills: Intimidation, Small Arms, Melee Combat, Heavy Weapons

Subsequent Terms: Choose up to 4 of the following per term: Observation, Intimidation, Disguise, Act/Bluff, Small Arm, Melee Combat, Bomb Making, Heavy Weapons, Luck, or Forgery

Contacts: Two Criminal, Police, Corporate Security, or Corporate

Special: -



# THE TERRIBLE HOUSE

Fiction

by Andrew Gardner-Blatch

READ ON, MCDUFF.

MY NAME IS Fuster. I wanted to tell you about my experience in a certain abode in London.

Let me introduce myself properly, I am Edward Fuster, born in 1901 at Richmond, Yorkshire. My father was English and my mother a disgraced German mistress. I am of a mature age and use a walking stick to support my locomotion, due to arthritis in my right leg. I tend toward sombre, but well-made apparel, and polished black boots. I keep my beard tightly trimmed and wear glasses. I always wear a hat, by habit a black homburg

I was educated at Oxford and the Sorbonne. I speak six languages and read eight including Arabic. I studied Archaeology and architecture, leaving the Sorbonne with a First class honours and Oxford with a degree in Surveying. I have travelled widely and frequently, never staying in more than one place for longer than four years. With one exception - New York, I stayed here in the company of a certain Miss Ellison for five years, but sadly this arrangement ended. It was during this time that my leg and heart were irreparably damaged.

Currently I live in Hampstead, alone, and this is by choice. My trade is house-sitting, and for a higher remittance I will provide Consultancy on surveying issues.

Last November I was asked to investigate a certain property on behalf of a property developer, their client was keen to sell, but rather hysterically at the time, felt that the house could not be sold in its current condition. The property developer acting on behalf of Mr Shaw, the owner, was rather embarrassed and took some time to adequately describe what was required. In a lengthy meeting they explained, carefully and indirectly that the property had an undeserved, reputation. Mr Shaw was keen to sell, and the developer was keen to buy. The house is situated in a secluded part of Mortlake in West London. It was surrounded by a high wall, which contained a now overgrown garden. The garden dated, as did the house to the 17th century,

and was laid in a Dutch style with two small "canals", bordered with tall hedges. Entry was through a narrow, tall gateway and thence to a rambling two-story building. The developer had some scale drawings but these were rather old, by around 150 years. My role was to accompany the developer and conduct a brief survey. The developer was keen for my opinion and for me to "rebrand" the house and its history. It was arranged that we should meet on the 25 of November at 14:00, at the Offices of Bankes & Barnes and then proceed to the premises. Mr Shaw had agreed to meet us at the property.

On the day in question I arrived at Bankes and Barnes in good time, a young secretary called Shana supplied me with a fine cup of coffee while I awaited Mr Barnes. Shana was a waif-like, blonde haired young lady, wearing a lovely purple dress. I was rather pleased to have arrived fifteen minutes early. In fact after about 25 minutes, Mr Barnes was ready and we drove in his car, a Mercedes, to Mortlake.

The address was in a less prosperous part of the village, and we had to park some distance away due to a lack of parking availability. The entrance to number 51 was down a rather dismal, unkempt footpath. It was obvious that the footpath had not been repaired for a good many years, most of the paving slabs were broken, with many uneven slabs, and in places bare earth and straggly weeds showing. The right hand side of the footpath was bordered by a high brick wall, a part of the property, while the opposite side was bound by a tall wooden fence. The fence had many broken panels and was clearly at the back end of a disused industrial site. There was a fair amount of obscene graffiti sprayed on the fence, curiously though the brick wall was devoid of any such marks, but on closer inspection I could see that there was numerous moss growths and lichen colonies.

We walked along the path for around 200 yards, until we came to the gated entrance way. This was indeed a distinguishing feature, a small tower

surmounting the wall. Underneath was the only visible entrance, a wide gateway, barred by a wrought iron gate. At some point this had been partially boarded, with just a small gap in the centre. In this hung a grey, rusty padlock. From which an ancient chain looped around the iron gates. It was now 15:00 and there was no sign of Mr Shaw. The entrance was still padlocked. Mr Barnes decided to call Mr Shaw on his mobile phone, and while he did I took the given opportunity to scrutinise the gate-tower. It was clearly two stories tall, with windows on each wall. The roof was pitched and still tiled, with little indication of damage. The windows on our side were dark and dirty. Through the boarded gates I could see a door into the left side of the gate. Beyond that was another set of gates, though these were a pair of arched wooden gates, slightly ajar.

I could hear Mr Barnes conversing on the telephone, so I wandered further down the footpath. A thick frost still clung to the grass and branches, and low grey clouds filled the sky. A cold wind blew dead leaves up the footpath, and I suppressed a shudder. I felt cold and alone, insubstantial against these primal forces of nature. The day seemed to be darkening, with an increasing winter gloom. A cold and oppressive twilight descended, chilling me to the bone, through my thick winter coat. It seemed as though as I was the only living person, in a world of cold and darkness.

Suddenly, I felt a hand on my shoulder, it was Barnes, telephone tight to his ear. He looked at me. "Bloody man, he can meet us here in 45 minutes, Fuster is that ok with you?" I replied positively. Mr Barnes completed his phone call and told me that Mr Shaw had been delayed and would meet us here in about 45 minutes. Mr Barnes was going to visit a local client and be back in thirty minutes.

I decided to stay and walk around the boundary, despite the bitter cold of the day and the approaching gloomy twilight. I turned and followed the

decaying footpath away from the main road. The gloom seemed to muffle the sound of cars, the only noise was a dull thrum of traffic and a slight wind blowing through the gaps and cracks in the fence.

I could make out a dark silhouette ahead of me in the gloom. The cold mist had seemed to gather and thicken, obscuring my sight and reducing my vision to a short distance. Through the gloom I could see dark spindly shapes pushing up from the ground, surrounded by a wiry mass. These materialised into a barrier of leaning and twisted iron railings. The railings were heavily rusted, and were surrounded by a seething mass of bleached thorns. Beyond these I could see long wiry grass and an overgrown graveyard, and in the murk I could make out a larger building.

I moved closer and was surprised to see a small pyramid shaped tomb, it had a heavily discoloured, rusted iron door, and facing it with outstretched branches and gnarled boughs, peeled of bark, lay the ruins of an old tree. It seemed like a huge, bleached skeleton, collapsed and clawing toward the strange tomb. The tomb had evidently been made from huge stone blocks, but these were now blackened and encrusted with patches of a pale moss. From my position behind the railings, I tried to make out the heavily weathered inscription on the tomb, I leant on the railings and peered closely. The railing started to fall, I put out my stick to steady myself, and then the railing I was holding snapped, with a dull and soft crack. I dropped the broken piece in my hand, and it sank into the twisted brambles without a trace. I hastily brushed my hands clean. If I wanted to learn more I would need to get closer, following the path to the left I came to a small iron gate in the railings. I pushed the gate, and to my surprise it opened easily, next to it, standing at an awkward angle, was a peeling noticeboard. On it I could just discern the following words:

#### The Chapel Services:

onday XXXX  
Fr XXXX  
Sat

#### Mass Founded

I pushed the gate open further and now low creak came from the rusty hinges. An overgrown path snaked through the long grass, still covered with frost, the mist cleared slightly and I was aware of a dark, brooding shape rearing above me. I moved closer and the peaked entry porch of a church materialised, under which was an entrance shrouded in darkness. I hesitated, a chill ran down my back. I suddenly felt that I was on the edge of something, I was gripped by a sudden and terrible fascination to enter the building.

Just then a slight gust of wind blew the chapel door open. In the gloomy interior I caught a glimpse of pews, long drapes and a pulpit. All covered in a thick layer of dust. There was a strong smell of damp, mouldy plaster and decay. I then heard a shout, it sounded muffled. I quickly turned and went back to the footpath, and peered through the gloom. I could indistinctly see the shape of someone near the gated entrance to the house. I started to walk briskly, only to see the figure disappear through the gate.

I called out "Barnes, Barnes!!!" and ran toward the gate, in the decreasing evening light, with the snowflakes swirling around. Upon reaching the gate, I found it swinging in the wind. In the swirling gloom I could make out the gatehouse above me, seemingly squatting over the entrance. Through the gateway I could make out a building, I estimated about 200 yards away. I suddenly felt an impulse to find Barnes. I stepped into the property: the gatehouse was made of brick and the ceiling was vaulted. On my left was a small door, and upon closer inspection I could see a narrow

# PROTODIMENSION MAGAZINE

## THE TERRIBLE HOUSE

staircase ascending at a sharp angle. I tried the door. It was locked, and judging by the cobwebs around it I would guess it has not been opened for some considerable time. I moved out of the arch and faced the house.

The house was double fronted with a central doorway. The downstairs windows were boarded, and the upstairs windows were shrouded by thick heavy curtains behind dirty glass. The whole building had an incredible feeling of malaise and decay, and dread.

Between myself and the building were three long narrow trenches, as I moved closer I could see that each was filled with dark, murky water. The wind was blowing harder than ever and the snow swirling more manically, and the early evening darkness settling around. Suddenly a window lit up one of the upper windows. A pale and cold light. I walked carefully along the edge of the central canal toward the front door. Ice had formed on the surface of the dark murky waters, creating an effect of...

As I reached the front door, it opened

The entire inside was open with no internal walls, just an iron staircase leading to a single door. The inside was dominated by three large pools, and an ever present smell of mould and decay. I noticed that each pool had steps down into the water, the water was dark, covered in vegetation and weeds. The mould on the walls glowed with a greenish, cold light. Suddenly I heard a noise and turned to see Barnes walking calmly in with another man. The other man was singularly strange to behold, he looked old, with a wizened face of sparse grey whiskers and large ears. But his eyes, his eyes seemed to blaze with an intensity and hatred. Barnes looked at me and said "Meet the seller - Mr Shaw". Mr Shaw raised his hand, and I thought at first he was offering to shake my hand, but instead he reached into his jacket and produced a long knife, with which he commenced to slide neatly into Barnes's chest.

Barnes collapsed into the dark pool behind him, the waters hardly rippled and he disappeared below the slimy surface. I gasped and Shaw smiled - "Got to feed", he whispered then started to walk toward me, knife in hand.

I reached into my own jacket and pulled my Mauser from its holster. I braced and squeezed the trigger, the gun boomed and a bullet slammed into Shaw. He flinched but then continued advancing. I fired again, and again - the bullets smashed into Shaw. He still advanced, knife in hand. I then fired off the remaining rounds - all six into his chest. Just yards from me he stopped and collapsed, dropping the knife. I kicked the knife into the pool and then looked at Shaw. He had numerous large holes in his chest, but he was still breathing, in ragged, gasping breaths. He then slid soundlessly into the nearest pool, disappearing below the green, turgid surface.

I approached the edge of the pool carefully, reloaded my Mauser and scanned the pool. The surface was still. I could not see Barnes, and was reluctant to enter the dark water. Suddenly from behind me I heard a distinct gurgle, I turned and I saw the surface of the next pool ripple, out of the water I saw a grimy, green hand break the surface. I held my Mauser and aimed carefully, and then another hand broke the surface, followed by another. The hands were smeared with thick green slime, and the nails were long and dark. Each reached up from the water, and grasped. I stepped back and the realised that each pool contained the same - there were countless hands.

I turned and ran, out of the front door and into the cold night. But then I stopped, the canals were alongside me, fear and doubt held me. The waters were unmoving, still, dark and almost oppressive. I then felt myself being pulled to the waters, the waters looked inviting, and I wanted to feel the cold turgid depths. Wanted to sink into it, lose myself in the dark. I approached closer to the nearest canal,

dropping to my knees on the hard frozen ground. The waters were covered by a layer of ice.

Something moved below a dark shape, then a pale hand scraped the ice. A face appeared - it was Shaw, his face bloodied, pale with that strange and horrific glow in his eyes. I drew closer, repelled and fascinated in equal measure. His hand balled into a fist and hit the ice from below, and a thin crack appeared. He punched again and his hand broke- through, reaching toward me. The smell was overwhelming, decay and rot. I looked at him and then I fired my Mauser; the hand exploded, Shaw disappeared. I struggled to my feet, and ran toward the gatehouse.

Just before there I stopped and turned, expecting to see an army of taloned fiends behind me. There was nothing just the still frozen canals. Looking at the house I could see a black silhouette in the upper story left window, and it appeared to be missing a hand. My heart froze and I faltered, my legs giving way and I fell to the cold earth. I could feel the cold draining the warmth from my hands. The wind blew sharper, stinging my face with sharp sleet. I knew I must leave now, I struggled to my feet, and half fell, half ran through the gateway. I noticed that the door into the gatehouse was open. Ignoring this I pushed the gate open and ran onto the cracked footpath. I kept running, not looking back.

I ran for about 20 minutes until I stopped on Sheen High Street. Gasping for breath, my leg aching, bent double I drew in shuddering gulps of the cold air. The traffic drove past oblivious, people busy with shopping gave curious glances. I stood, my heart now beating slower, my chest no longer heaving. I walked calmly into the nearest coffee shop.



# PROTODIMENSION INTERVIEWS TOREN ATKINSON

An interview

By Lee Williams

FOR PERSONNEL INSIGHT

**W**E WERE LUCKY enough to be granted an interview with the ever-busy Toren Atkinson, who you may know is an artist, actor, musician and gamer. Hope you enjoy it!

**PDM:**

We start with our standard first question: how did you first get into gaming? Where and when did you start out?

**TA:**

I believe I started playing D&D with a small group of friends in junior high school in Chilliwack BC. After every session I would draw a comic of what happened during the session. Then one of my friends dumped a milk crate full of books and modules on me for a very modest sum, and I went down that rabbit hole quick as a fiendish dire bunny. I started to design my own RPGs, including a superhero roleplaying game called “Power Enterprise” which I worked on and played with scores of victims over the course of many years.

[http://www.thickets.net/toren/games/  
power-enterprise/](http://www.thickets.net/toren/games/power-enterprise/)

**PDM:**

What made you branch out into illustration and of course music? Was it just an extension of your gaming creativity, or did they happen first?

**TA:**

I was drawing since I could hold a crayon - mostly dinosaurs and monsters - and art has infiltrated every part of my life. As I write this my day job is storyboarding for the Cloudy With A Chance of Meatballs TV series. So art definitely came before games and the band, but it has been an integral part to those and other projects. When I discovered H.P. Lovecraft and the Call of Cthulhu roleplaying



game my subject matter shifted from superheroes to unspeakable horrors pretty quickly.

**PDM:**

What game or games do you most enjoy playing, and which do you most enjoy refereeing?

**TA:**

One cannot deny the classic appeal of D&D, I still play it today. I have run many a Call of Cthulhu campaign as well. When I was a younger nerd I designed a percentile dice system for a game I called “Godrealms” which was a D&D knockoff with a bit more mythological/folklore feel to it. That game didn’t survive long but when I got together with my bandmate Warren Banks to design a pulpy, 50’s space opera roleplaying game (with Lovecraftian elements, of course), I based it off the old Godrealms system. That game was the ENnie Award-winning Spaceship Zero, published by Green Ronin in 2002, and it was a tie-in with my bands album of the same name. I went on to adapt that

rather simple but versatile rules system for some personal projects: I came back to superheroes, this time anthropomorphic animal superheroes, with a game based on my ongoing project The World Wildlife Federation of Justice. <http://worldwild-lifefederationofjustice.com/>

90% of the time I game I am the DM/GM/ZM. I really enjoy crafting plots and telling stories. As a professional voice actor I get to practice my chops performing NPCs as well.

**PDM:**

Do you have a favourite gaming genre, or a preferred style of gameplay?

**TA:**

Right now my genre of choice is post-apocalyptic. I'm currently working on an over-the-top post-apocalyptic game adapted from the Spaceship Zero rules which I'm very excited about and hope to publish this year. I collect and paint miniatures, so whenever action time happens in any of my games, that's when maps, minis and the wet erase markers hit the table. I enjoy the cooperative storytelling games that have blossomed over the past decade but when I GM its standard classic Dungeon Master style.

**PDM:**

Have the internet and social networks affected your creative process, if at all? The upcoming Thickets album is being crowdfunded at the time of writing, so I guess it's been a bit of a boon overall?

**TA:**

Absolutely. The internet giveth and the internet taketh away. With file sharing of music it's not as easy to manage music sales, but when crowdfunding became a thing those sales are no longer quite so important - now we can fund our next album on a promise and the reputation we've made over the

past 2 decades. Social media also has other perks to the creative process - in the old days when I was stuck on an idea I'd have to rely on a small circle of friends and perhaps a fair amount of time to unstuck myself. These days I can just post a question on my Facebook wall and since I have such a diverse and hearty contact list who are almost always online I can get a good answer much more quickly.

**PDM:**

On a related note, give us if you would a potted history of the band.

**TA:**

Back in the early 90's I was playing a lot of Call of Cthulhu with my college buddy Warren. Our mutual friends were having some success with their band Mystery Machine, so we decided if they could do it, so could we. Whereas our friends were actual musicians, we had to rely on our showmanship and a gimmick. We took our band name from an H.P. Lovecraft short story "The Tomb." Our first live show was just three songs and a papier-mache Cthulhu head. The Darkest of the Hillside Thickets received upgrades on musical skills and stage costumes since then, but we're still riding the coattails of poor old dead Howard.

**PDM:**

Also on the topic of music, are you prolific songwriters? Does the band have like a million unfinished songs on scraps of paper, or is it a long and slow process?

**TA:**

"Prolific" would be a strong word. I do have a couple of audio cassettes full of what I call "song germs" that are melodies I have come up with. Some of these went on to become actual Thickets songs. Others I've been using for a solo a capella

project that has been bubbling on the backburner for a couple years. Traditionally, however, as a band we don't practice as often as most, since the five band members live in three different cities in southwest British Columbia. These past few months however have been very productive and I'm excited to share the dark magic we've been weaving with our oh-so-patient fans.

**PDM:**

Which of your own works are you most pleased with, thus far? Is it music, art or something else?

**TA:**

I like it all! My life has been consumed with The Thickets' new album "The Dukes of Alhazred" but I'm excited to get my post-apocalyptic RPG back on track.

**PDM:**

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer our questions!

**TA:**

No, thank you!



# THE IDOL

Fiction

by Anthony Lee-Dudley

MORE EDGY READING PLEASURE

**Y**OU DON'T NEED a clock to measure the passing of time.

It can be seen in the shadow moving across the torn wallpaper as the sun goes down, and in the steady dripping of a rusty tap.

As a candle burns down, the flow of the wax plots each fluid moment.

Even the steadily reducing levels in the bottle in front of me, accompanied by the clicking of melting ice in my glass are measures in their own way.

*Was that a noise?*

The house is as still as ever. The rooms upstairs are locked; I've been sleeping on the sofa.

Sleeping! A change of position is the best I can manage. Supine in the darkness, colours twisting and turning before my eyes, I wait.

Waiting, as always, for... something.

Since that day. That day that picked up my comfortable world and dashed it against the unyielding surface of reality like a snow globe shattered upon the floor. The world that had, until then, seemed so real. So substantial. So ... explicable.

It was also, it seems, so very, very small.

Like the snow globe, the boundaries of my world contained a bubble. A bubble that I called 'normality'. Likely you do too. Also like the glass surrounding those wintery scenes, the boundary of my world, and of yours, was terrifyingly fragile. A gossamer membrane shielding me, shielding us, from a horrific truth.

*There! I'm sure I heard something again. I'll just check the doors are locked and bolted.*

All secured. As best I can at least. I fear iron bolts and wooden doors will prove little hindrance to ... whomever ... whatever ... comes this night.

Another drink I think. Steady the nerves. Dutch courage they call it. I'll take any nationality of bravery I can get.

*Did I load my pistol? Yes.*



It began when an item came into my possession. Not an unusual occurrence for the proprietor of an antiques store I'll grant you, but this item was by any criteria odd.

An idol or fetish of some kind carved in a rough almost naïve style, the statue was of a man but strangely warped and out of proportion. The figure is standing with its head thrown back and its eyes closed, as if enjoying the rain on its face. All wrapped around with carved ... well, vines I suppose.

These vines seemed almost fractal in nature, entwined around one another; they began nowhere and barely, if ever, ended. I spent hours twisting the statue this way and that, trying to follow the vines carved around it. Somehow the points where they grew from the ground always eluded me. It was almost as if they originated in Him.

Sometimes I swear the damn things moved as I was turning it

The candle is guttering now, throwing dancing shapes upon the wallpaper. I think the sun has set

Around the base of the statue were carved runes so basic that, for a long time I mistook them for scratches. Once I realised my mistake, I realised that if I could decipher those runes then I might be able to give Him, the statue that is, the provenance He... It... Deserved.

My research into the idol threw up dead end after dead end.

It was, I was confidently assured by one expert as he pocketed my money, African in design; another could prove it was of Central American origin, as always for a price. Some, the more honest, thought they saw similarities to various cultures, but never quite the same. It matched no known style that I could find. It had some elements from many different folkloric traditions but fit completely with none.

The runes were almost as mysterious.

I managed to trace some runes with similarities, runes that were possibly Germanic or Northern Scandinavian in nature, this only added to my confusion.

Becoming increasingly frustrated I spent thousands on research, selling my antiques, my possessions and eventually my shop to chase down leads.

Like a madman, I pursued the ghosts of hints across the globe. A word here, a badly drawn image there, I quested relentlessly for the truth about Him, it.

*Oh God! I think the light from the candle is getting weaker. Yet it looks like its burning as well as it ever was. Can I hear voices? Perhaps it is just revellers in the street outside.*

Eventually, came into my possession the key I had long searched for.

A contact I had made in the less salubrious dark margins that surround the more conventional world of archaeology sent me a message. He had located an item that he thought I would be interested in.

A book.

I liquidated the last of my holdings and travelled to South America to meet my contact.

In the sweltering heat of a Guyanese bar I handed over almost every penny I had, gambling everything on this one last throw of the dice.

I was not to be disappointed.

The diary, as I discovered it was, was written in the spidery hand of an unnamed archaeologist from decades before. Much of it was illegible, destroyed by the passing years, but by dint of careful study I was able to ascertain that this long dead fellow had found a temple or similar ritual building hidden in the depths of a cave system located in the heart of the Amazon.

The exact location was indecipherable, but that did not matter.

He had copied down a long series of pictograms, or possibly runes, that he had found carved upon walls of the hidden chamber. He had also copied down faithfully what was carved into the rock beneath them.

Silently saluting my benefactor's diligence in meticulously recording everything, I realised that neither the pictograms nor the language carved below them meant anything to him, he was just being assiduous in his recording, but the language was one I recognised from my searches.

Rushing home I began the task of translating the carvings around His base.

Hours became days as I carefully transcribed the message. I realised I could not only translate the written words but also produce a reasonably accurate pronunciation to this unknown language.

*Did I check my pistol?*

Finally, with shaking hands and the strange words running through my mind, all entwined around my thoughts like the vines around Him, I felt ready.

Placing Him upon the table, I prepared myself for the work ahead and...

Ready? Ready for what?

What was I doing? The full realisation of my actions over the previous months crashed down upon my mind like a wave upon the shore, I had lost everything chasing this Godforsaken insanity.

Nearly everything.

Despite everything I'd done, every crazed dash across continents and costly voyage to distant shores. Despite every money stuffed envelope and back alley deal, I had come to my senses in the nick of time.

I still had my soul.

I felt unnoticed tension flow from my body and a shaky, but blessedly human, weakness in its place.

I leant forward over the table, carefully removing my hands from the idol and placing them either side of it. My head hung loosely over the idol and I began to laugh. A rough sound, a real sound.

I felt better than I had for months.

Looking down upon the idol's upturned faced I continued to laugh, all the while wondering how this ridiculous thing had wormed its way into my mind as it had.

Then He opened His eyes.

The laugh turned instantly into a throttled scream in my throat as I gazed down upon His Awful physiognomy ... And He gazed back!

His presence invaded every fibre of my being. I felt like I was a frog, splayed open and pinned in place to allow the most intimate dissection. He saw every iota of me; physical, mental, spiritual.

I was, in that instant, weighed, measured and found pitifully wanting.

No longer a being in my own right, the last thing I remember before my body mercifully shut down and I descended into blackness, was my traitorous voice reciting those words over and over ...

I awoke sometime late the next day, exhausted and covered in blood. I looked around in some confusion, but of the idol there was no sign.

Checking myself over I could find no source for the crimson gore adhering to almost every inch of me. Nothing that could explain the chunks of meat lodged under my fingernails or the coppery taste in my mouth.

Nothing in the room gave any clue as to what horrors had been visited upon me. Nothing to reduce my confusion.

Until I slid open the dining room doors, and viewed the charnel house beyond.

Seeing the bodies, the pieces of bodies, brought it back in full impact. The things I had done, things He had done through my agency.

Tearless sobs wracked my body at the remembrance, dry heaves turned liquid and even more evidence came to light. The World span.

Time passed.

I came back to my senses some hours later, still kneeling where I had fallen.

With a calmness born of overload I closed the dining room doors and made my way up to the bathroom. I washed as much of the evidence as I could from my body and drew on clean clothes.

After packing a bag with a few essential items I carried my soiled clothes back downstairs to the abattoir that had been my dining room. Throwing the bloodstained rags into the room, I found a can of kerosene and liberally covered the - items - in there.

My last thought as I shouldered my pack and then lit the match was 'at least it's over now'.



As I turned my back upon the pyre I hadn't realise how wrong I was.

Once every month since, the story has repeated itself. Every month He finds me. Every month. Without fail.

No matter how far I run, how remote my location or distance from civilisation, from people. The result is the same; carnage in His Name.

Worse still, I can feel Him growing stronger each time, revelling in each sacrifice. Gorging on the pain and horror as He forces me to gorge in turn. My will to resist Him, to minimise the damage, is equally reducing.

God help me, sometimes I don't even want to!

*I can definitely hear the Voices now.  
Will tonight be any different? Will tonight be  
the night I find my courage?*

*There! That's the glow that precedes Him. The  
Voices are louder now, like buzzing in my ears.  
The barrel of my gun is cold against my temple.  
This time. This time.  
Perhaps.*



# THE PROCTOR, GAMBLE, JOHNSON, & JOHNSON (PGJ&J) TOWER

*A location*

By Paul Riegel-Green

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY 1ST ED.

**T**HIS IS THE centerpiece of the Cincinnati Metroplex. It sits right on the Ohio River and occupies 100 square blocks, ten blocks by ten blocks. It stands one hundred stories in the sky and is a special fly zone.

It is surrounded by a five story high wall that is coated with a gray paint that will absorb paints used by street artists and others who want to desecrate the tower's external wall. It has three six-lane car entrances with manned gates and a boat gate on the Ohio River.

Each entrance gate has a central control room that is set behind the wall that houses cameras that cover all aspects, including underneath, of each lane of traffic for both cars and pedestrians. This central control house includes controls for the retractable concrete columns that stop each car for inspection. They also have monitors that weigh the car comparing it to the normal weight for the car, a Geiger counter and a chemical sniffer to try to detect contraband and nuclear and chemical weapons.

The central control building contains sixteen uniformed PGJ&J corporate security members, each one having a uniform, belt holstered sidearm, an ammo pouch with two additional magazines of ammunition, a Taser, mace, and a handcuff case with standard handcuffs. There is a four man search team made up of uniformed PGJ&J corporate security members each one having a uniform, belt holstered sidearm, an ammo pouch with two additional magazines of ammunition, a Taser, mace, a handcuff case with standard handcuffs, and tools needed to inspect and take apart cars that fail inspections. Lastly, there is a four man Emergency Response Team, composed of corporate security strikers, each having the normal corporate security members gear plus bullet proof vests and assault rifles.

The each lane has a gate are manned by two uniformed PGJ&J corporate security members,

equipped the same as uniformed corporate security members in the central control building. They also have wand metal detectors and mirrors capable of looking under cars and flashlights.

Vehicles that don't pass inspection are sent to a walled in additional scrutiny area. Once a car is in there it will be inspected by the search team until cleared or something is found. In addition, there is a holding area consisting of a large locked room with cameras and large windows so that they can be under observation at all times. In addition, there are two heavy duty chain link cages to keep individuals of special interest.

When a vehicle pulls up the drive will pass out Dreamland Passes or PGJ&J Identification for everyone in the vehicle. Those entering with PGJ&J ID enter all in one lane that is reserved for employees. The officer will scan the pass or ID and confirm that they are good. Once they are confirmed the officer will direct them to the correct parking area and what levels are available to them.

The barriers go down, the driver gets their passes/IDs back and goes and parks in the designated location of the five story parking area. From there they go fifty elevators, spread in banks around the parking lots. Each elevator only goes to certain levels and sometimes only to certain areas of the same level. Upon calling the elevator an ID or pass may be required, the higher the floor the more likely it is but mostly the separation between parking areas being the primary internal security for low levels.

The lowest levels are accessed by the 6C, 6O, and 6S elevators. The 6C elevators will transport those on it to levels six through nine in the commercial section of the dreamland that includes stores, restaurants, gyms, hotels, large commercial casinos, massage parlors, and other commercial ventures. Elevator 6O will transport only those with Corporate Identification to levels six through ten of corporate offices. Elevator 6S will take the riders to

# PROTODIMENSION MAGAZINE

## THE PROCTOR, GAMBLE, JOHNSON, & JOHNSON (PG&J) TOWER

level six in the sports arenas, arriving between three great arenas. The sports arenas were for baseball, football/soccer, and basketball/hockey/concerts.

Above that were elevators 11C and 11O. 11C elevators go to floors eleven through twenty with more exclusive stores, restaurants, gyms, parks, a high class hotel, companion services, and other commercial ventures. 11C also features access to the University of Cincinnati, its housing, and dorms. Elevator 11O goes to upper corporate offices on levels eleven through nineteen and requires Corporate ID that would allow them access to those floors.

The next bank of elevators would consist of the 21C and 21R sets. The 21C elevators go to floors twenty one through twenty five and includes very exclusive stores, restaurants, spas, brothels casinos, and corporate transit housing and other very select commercial ventures. Elevator 21R goes to levels twenty one through thirty of the corporate

residential tower. This is housing for most of the lower middle management of the corporation. Each level there having a canteen, a school, several churches, a companion service, and several fast food outlets.

Elevator 31 goes to levels thirty one through ninety five of the tower. This consists of residences for middle to upper management in the corporation. The higher the floor the more exclusive and more elaborate the residences. In addition, they have their own convenience stores, schools, several churches, a more exclusive companion service, and carry out and sit down eating establishments.

Elevator 96 requires a special ID card to even summon the elevator car. Once there the car automatically takes to floor ninety six through ninety eight. These are exclusive penthouses for the upper management of the corporation. Levels forty five, besides penthouses, includes a grocery and general goods delivery storefront, elite schools,

several churches, and several fine dining establishments that will either allow you to eat in or prepare it in your home. Levels ninety seven and ninety eight are all exclusive increasingly larger penthouse. Companions also are provided to each penthouse

Elevator 99 requires a special ID card to even summon the elevator car. Once there the car automatically takes to floor ninety nine. These are exclusive penthouses for the upper management of the corporation. Any needs of the residents are met by the penthouse staff that like the companion, is supplied to each penthouse.

Finally there is Elevator 00 A thru E that require a special ID card to even summon the elevator car. Once there the car automatically takes to the penthouse that is allowed by the ID. These are exclusive penthouses for the elite management of the corporation. Any needs of the residents are met by the penthouse staff, which like the companion, is supplied to each penthouse.



# THE SCRIBE'S STUDY

A Demon Seed

By Lee Williams

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY/  
CONSPIRACY RULES

**A**MILDLY FAMOUS AUTHOR of science fiction and horror tales vanishes mysteriously from the study at his home, where he always sits to do his writing. Nobody was seen entering or leaving the building, but when his agent called round to see how the latest manuscript was coming along there was absolutely no sign of the writer.

The idea is that the author has a very low level empathic or psychic ability and has been picking up very vague 'echoes' of beings and events happening elsewhere in the multiverse. Also, to make himself completely comfortable when writing he has organised his study in a way that makes him feel 'almost separate from the world'.

What is actually happening here is that as his psychic powers have grown slowly, he has unwittingly managed to slip into a pocket proto-dimension when he writes. The p-dim is only about the same size as his study, and his mental emanations have shaped it into an exact replica of the 'real' room at his house. Recently, the growth of his ability has attracted a Darkling (not sure what kind yet), and they have imprisoned him in the p-dim version of his study. Even the writer himself does not know the truth - as far as he knows someone is holding him hostage in his own home.

What is more, the manuscript he is working on is the first book to be written completely inside the 'Study' p-dim, and has itself become infused with some sort of power from its environment. The manuscript could be something that helps detect Darklings in the real world, or it might have a repelling effect on them. It might be useful to a Darkling as a power source, or it could even be a key to enable Dimension Walk without penalty. Just how dangerous or powerful the manuscript actually is can be determined by the individual Referee.

The player-characters would have to work this one out quite quickly, as the Darkling is currently on a mission to harvest empathic brains for use in some variety of DarkTek and it will be returning to

pick up the author within a certain time limit. The Darklings may or may not realise that the manuscript itself has some power, so if the party are too late to save the author they might still redeem themselves by obtaining the original manuscript.

*NOTE: The author isn't a huge name like King or HPL but more of a Graham Masterton type – popular enough but not the master of his field. To add a more fun element the Referee might choose to model him after the fictional Garth Marenghi from the UK TV series "Darkplace".*



protodimension magazine